STOURBRIDGE
CHRONICLE

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£10m BOOST FOR TOURISM UNVEILED

by Heather Large & Andrew Turton

MULTI-million pound plans to boost tourism, create much-needed jobs and breathe new life into Dudley borough have been heralded as the start of a new era for the area.

Work is moving forward on regeneration projects including linking top tourist attractions. Dudley Council leader David Sparks has welcomed the schemes saying they will boost the area's economy and help attract visitors to the Black Country.

And Dudley College principal Lowell Williams said a new £6 million manufacturing and engineering learning hub which is also planned, would benefit generations of youngsters. Councillor Sparks was speaking after the council unveiled a £10.1million masterplan to create a single access point for Dudley Zoo, Dudley Canal Trust and the Black Country Living Museum. It is the latest stage in the long-awaited redevelopment of Dudley's Castle Hill and includes a new visitor entrance and welcome piazza for the zoo.

It follows the approval of a separate £3m plan for a new visitor and heritage centre at Dudley Canal Trust.

Called the Portal, the building will provide families with an insight into the Black Country's canal heritage.

The centre will be off Birmingham New Road at the Todds End entrance, linking the attraction to the Black Country Living Museum.

Other regeneration schemes in the town have also been given the green light.

Proposals for a multi-million pound supermarket development on the site of Cavendish House, Trindle Road were approved by councillors who said it would transform that area of the town.

Investment

The scheme will create 300 full-time and part-time jobs and have a projected annual store turnover of £44m.

Councillor Sparks said he was pleased the town was attracting investment and funding to help push the regeneration forward.

"These developments mark a truly historic moment for Dudley," he said.

"For the first time in Dudley's history European finance is coming to fund a joint project embracing Dudley Zoo, Black Country Living Museum and Dudley Canal Trust.

"This is literally a vote of confidence in the future of Castle Hill as the centre of the Black Country's bid to become a major UK tourist attraction."

Plans also include a £6million engineering and manufacturing complex called Dudley Advance for Dudley College, which is the final phase of its Learning Quarter.

"It is a new era not only for Dudley College but for the town as well," he said.

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An artist's impression of how the new entrance to Dudley Zoo could look

Another impression of how the new Canal Trust basin would look in the future

School taken out of special measures by Ofsted team

A ONCE-TROUBLED secondary school has emerged from special measures following an Ofsted inspection.

Teaching, leadership and pupils' achievement have all improved at Thorns Community College, in Stockwell Avenue, Brierley Hill, according to the inspectors.

Although placing the school in the category of "requires improvement", Ofsted praised the new leadership for its "outstanding commitment to improving the school".

The school, which has 1,247 pupils, was placed in special measures after a critical Ofsted inspection two years ago. Principal Deane Baker said this week: "We are all tremendously proud of what has been achieved in the last year or so. Everyone has worked incredibly hard and the work continues."

The latest inspection was on December 4 and 5 and the report highlighted vast improvements in the behaviour and attitudes of children. Teaching was found to have improved significantly.

In the report lead inspector James McNeillie said: "Students are making more rapid progress in almost all subjects and in all year groups than in the past. This is a direct result of better teaching and students' better attitudes to learning."

Planned museum moves a step closer

A PLAN to transform a derelict former glassworks into a world-class museum moved a step closer when a bid for £2 million European funding was completed.

Work could get under way by the summer to rejuvenate the Grade II listed Stuart Crystal factory in Wordsley if the first funding appeal is approved.

The museum will house glass collections from across the region and is expected to attract thousands of visitors.

Site owners Complex Development Projects urged Dudley Council to press ahead with a quicker application than was originally planned.

Council leader Councillor David Sparks admitted the authority had put off the museum plans until 2015 to await the next application round for the European Regional Development Fund.

But the developer has sought to forge ahead with its own application, supported by the authority, in an attempt to move the project forward.

A decision on the application is expected in the next few weeks. The hope is that the attraction will emulate the Corning Museum of Glass in the US.

Town losing another shop

TOY shop The Rabbit and Rhino is the latest Stourbridge business to close, blaming disruption caused by a multi-million pound redevelopment in the town centre.

Owner of the shop in Market Street, Lisa Homer, said sales dropped by nearly 50 per cent during 2012, because of the building work.

There have been several closures but Dudley Council says disturbance caused during the £50 million redevelopment of the Crown Centre, which will create a new Tesco employing up to 320 people, will be worth it in the end.

Pledge to continue campaign on homes

THE BATTLE to stop homes being built on the Hagley Hall estate near Stourbridge will go on, vowed campaigners after the plans were given the go-ahead.

The proposal to build 175 homes was approved by Bromsgrove planners on Monday, despite fierce opposition.

Residents said services in Hagley would be unable to cope with the new residents.

Hagley Parish Council chairman Steve Colella said they would now be considering whether to launch a legal challenge against the decision.

Fran Evans, of Kidderminster Road, said she was angry and disappointed by the decision.

"We all feel so strongly that this development should not be allowed to go ahead," she said.

Councillors said the development abided by planning rules and no objections had been lodged by highways officers.

Councillor John Tidmarsh said:"If the people of Hagley want to ensure their sons and daughters have the opportunity to live in this delightful place, then they're going to have to accept change."

Michael Robson, for developer Cala Homes, said the site had been considered appropriate for residential development for 25 years.

Book among bestsellers

THE debut novel by Wordsley-born Steve Watson was the UK's 11th best-selling book of 2012 – beating JK Rowling's The Casual Vacancy into 12th place.

Before I Go To Sleep by Steve Watson sold 357,000 copies.

The data comes from Nielsen Bookscan, which collects information from bookshops across the UK.

Work starts soon on a film version of Mr Watson's book, starring Nicole Kidman.

He is now working on a follow-up novel.

Wombourne 1st Windows

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Plaque at Queen Street Cemetery, Walsall, to James Thompson VC

Barry Booth at the grove of his great-grandfather Anthony Booth VC, at St Michael's Church, Brierley Hill. The headstone is now weatherworn

Anthony Booth VC who bravely led his men to safety in the Zulu War

Captain Bonner was awarded the Victoria Cross for his role in WWI

Preserving graves of bravest war heroes

Should society do more to honour the memory of our Victoria Cross winners? **MARK ANDREWS** looks at the state of the graves belonging to the West Midlands' greatest war heroes

BARRY Booth wanders among the unkempt graves around St Michael's Church in Brierley Hill.

"Some of them are really overgrown, with weeds everywhere," he says. "I'm glad it's not one of those."

The 52-year-old banker from Bridgnorth is looking for the grave belonging to his great-grandfather, Sgt Anthony Booth VC.

"It looks like somebody has been doing some work to tidy it up."

But while the grave has been kept tidy, the grey headstone has not escaped the ravages of the last 113 years. The edge is jagged and the lettering on the gravestone needs cleaning.

"Anthony Booth's grave needs a fair amount of work to be done," says Gary Stapleton of the Victoria Cross Trust.

Men like Sgt Booth, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for leading a team of just eight men to safety after coming under attack from 800 enemy troops in the Zulu War, were the bravest of the brave.

Concerns

The VC is the highest honour for valour in the face of the enemy, and one would have had to have demonstrated remarkable courage to have such an award bestowed upon them.

But there are now growing concerns that the monuments dedicated to the memories of these heroes have been neglected.

Mr Stapleton, a 45-year-old businessman from Doncaster, founded the Victoria Trust after discovering that a VC local to him was lying in a neglected grave. He says his research has uncovered hundreds of examples of graves falling into disrepair, while another 78 are unmarked.

"Just about every one of these graves needs some work," he says. "All should be cleaned annually."

Some of these, such as the grave of Smethwick Second World War hero Able Seaman Billy Savage, who is buried in Falmouth, Cornwall, receive the attention they deserve. "That is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves commission, so it is cleaned once a year and should be in very good condition," says Mr Stapleton.

David Partridge, aged 92, next to the well-maintained grave of his uncle, Charles George "Gus" Bonner VC at St Mary's Church, Aldridge

But the cost of bringing all VC graves up to this standard has been estimated at £1.2 million.

"There are lots of people who say they will do the job themselves, but what we really need is money," he says.

"We don't want well-meaning people turning up with household cleaners and damaging the graves beyond repair. Cleaning gravestones his a highly skilled job."

Former Conservative Party deputy chairman Michael Ashcroft has become so concerned about the state of many of the graves that he has set aside £177,000 to spend on the graves of scores of VCs.

Lord Ashcroft has pledged to spend up to £1,000 on restoration work for memorials to the recipients of any of the VCs which form part of his collection, which is on display at the Imperial War Museum in London.

"Nearly 1,000 recipients of the VC are buried in churchyards in the UK, and many of these graves have fallen into a pitiable state," says the peer.

"I hope that my pledge will encourage others, including the Government and concerned groups and individuals, to find the funds to restore every derelict grave of a VC recipient to its former glory."

One West Midlands VC buried in an unmarked grave is James Thompson, who was given the medal for saving the life of his captain during the Siege of Delhi in 1857, when that officer was surrounded by a party of Ghazees.

There is no headstone to mark his grave at Queen Street Cemetery in Walsall, but at least there is now a plaque on the cemetery gates.

Yet his great-grandson Michael Thompson says even getting that modest memorial installed involved a lengthy process.

"It was the council, initially they said Sister Dora's plaque was the only one allowed on the gates, but eventually they said we could do it as long as it was in keeping with it. It went on for quite a while."

Pte Thompson's memory is also honoured by a plaque at Walsall Museum, which also commemorates the life of Walsall's other two VCs, John Henry Carless and Charles "Gus" Bonner.

Serving

Ordinary Seaman Carless was serving at a gun aboard HMS Caledon during the Second Battle of Heligoland Bight in the First World War.

Even after being fatally wounded, he continued to go about his duties, getting up after he collapsed to try to help the the crew.

His body was never recovered, but there is also a bust at the Walsall Museum in his memory.

Captain Bonner, who was awarded the medal for his fierce fighting at the Bay of Biscay during the First World War, was cremated following his death in 1951.

His ashes were buried at St Mary's Church in Aldridge, and a headstone was installed following the death of his widow in the 1970s.

Today the memorial is in good condition, being lovingly maintained by his surviving family.

"A friend of mine cuts the grass around it, and we have planted a lot of bulbs so it looks nice in the spring," says his nephew David Partridge, who is now aged 92.

Mr Partridge says even as a young man, he was left in no doubt that his uncle was a man of great courage, and he does believe that the younger generation recognises the importance of preserving the memories of what our forefathers achieved in the field of battle. But Gary Stapleton says it is important that we all back up our respect with hard cash, as we all owe it to those who risked – and often gave – their lives for our freedom.

Nights of laughter lined up for halls

DUDLEY and Stourbridge Town Halls will welcome a host of comedy acts.

The spring season will see two comics at Stourbridge with Mark Thomas performing his acclaimed Bravo Figaro, a bittersweet tribute to his opera-loving builder dad on February 15, with Yorkshire comic and Edinburgh best newcomer Alun Cochrane on March 4.

At Dudley Town Hall, Jethro is back in town on February 23 and Ken Dodd makes a return on March 9 with another marathon show.

This is followed by Jasper Carrot and Bev Bevan performing Made in Brum, a mix of comedy, music and banter on April 11.

Dave Spikey's first appearance in the borough is a night at Dudley Town Hall on April 13.

Ed Byrne is returning on October 14 and Jason Manford is booked for two dates on December 2 and 3.

Councillor Tracy Wood, cabinet member for environment and culture, said:"There are some great names booked for the borough in 2013, with old favourites like Ken Dodd as well as other award-winning performers like Mark Thomas who is bringing his acclaimed show Bravo Figaro to Stourbridge."

Approval is set for flats

REVISED plans to convert the boiler house at the former Wordsley Hospital into apartments are poised to be given the go-ahead.

Shropshire Homes had previously been granted permission to create 11 homes.

But the scheme has been amended to nine apartments down to nine. The developer said all but one of the units would have one bedroom with the remaining apartment having two bedrooms.

Planning officers at Dudley Council have recommended the application be approved. A decision will be made at this week.

Have your say

THE next meeting of Stourbridge Township Council will take place today (Thur) in the Amblecote Room, Stourbridge Town Hall, starting at 7.15pm. Residents are welcome to attend and raise any issues.

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Four are rescued from river

FOUR people had to be rescued from a river in Stourbridge after a woman jumped into the water followed by three men who tried to get her out.

Fire crews were called to Mill Race Lane at around 8.15pm on New Year's Eve after the group became stranded on a riverbank.

The woman, who had been drinking, jumped into the river first.

The three men followed to try to rescue her – only to get stuck themselves.

Firefighters from Stourbridge, Smethwick and a water rescue team were dispatched to the scene along with paramedics.

An extendable ladder was used to bring all them to safety.

They were given first aid by paramedics but none suffered serious injuries although the woman was beginning to get frantic.

Stourbridge fire station crew commander Simon Griffiths, said: "The rescue was carried out quickly and efficiently."

Demand on career help

CALLS to protect a Dudley careers advice service that has helped more than 50,000 young people have been made. Education training provider Prospects lost its £1.3 million contract to run the Connexions careers service in 2011.

Two careers centres in Stourbridge and Dudley controversially closed when the talks to broker a new contract between Prospects and the council failed.

Dudley Council runs the service through the www.connexionsdudley.org website, but it announced £162,000 of cuts to its Connexions budget for the current financial year.

Conservative spokeswoman on children's services, Councillor Liz Walker, said she feels the present system works run by the new Labour administration. But she added the service needed protecting in the future as young people struggle to find jobs.

Entertaining talk

HISTORIAN Ned Williams will give a Black Country Society talk on entertainment in the region in days gone by on January 16 at St Mary's Church Centre, Kingswinford. It starts at 7.45pm.

Award-winning stylist Graham cutting out

Salon colleagues with Graham as he retires

FROM afros and beehives to bob cuts and mullets, award-winning hairdresser Graham Middleton has seen them all during his five decades in the trade.

But now he has hung up his scissors and blow dryer after retiring from his salon Graham's Hair and Beauty.

The 65-year-old, from Dudley, has seen many changing styles and techniques in the industry since first starting out as a Saturday boy in a Wall Heath barber shop at the age of 15.

He quickly learned on the job picking up techniques and developing his skills as he worked his way up from an apprentice. Just before his 21st birthday he opened his first unisex salon in Clarence Street, Upper Gornal, in 1968.

Not long after setting out on his own, there was a big change in hairdressing as blow-drying became all the rage. "In the 70s the cut and blow-dry was what everyone wanted and it's stayed that way ever since," he said.

Another shift in the industry has been the amount of money people are willing to spend on their hair.

At the time he was first starting out a short back and sides for men would cost 4/6 or about 22p. Now the same hair cut costs £10. He said the amount of money women pay has soared especially with colouring added. "Customers especially women, are perfectly happy to spend whatever it takes to make them feel their best," he said.

About 18 years ago the salon moved to The Arcade, in Kent Street, Upper Gornal. Among his loyal customers was Louise Gutteridge, whose hair Mr Middleton has cut for around 20 years. She said: "He will be missed very much by everyone. I am sad to see him go."

Graham with some of his awards in 1970

Zoo hopes new entrance will pull in more visitors

THEY say that first impressions count and bosses at Dudley Zoo will be hoping their new-look entrance will prove a feather in their cap when it comes to attracting more visitors.

It will be created as part of a £10.1million project to help regenerate Castle Hill.

Tourism bosses have unveiled the plans to create a single point of access to the zoo, the Dudley Canal Trust and the Black Country Living Museum. A visitor entrance for the zoo and an attractive piazza will welcome families and there will be animal sculptures and seating.

by Heather Large

Dudley Zoo's chief executive Peter Suddock said the project was a welcome boost for the zoo.

"Our customers constantly remind us this area offers both their first and last view of Dudley and thus providing a new entrance leading directly from our car park to the zoo site will greatly enhance the visitor experience," he said.

Leisure

A shared car park with 600-spaces will be created along with the visitor arrival point to be built at the back of the existing car park behind JB's.

The project will see a secondary road being built to link the access road to the visitor reception for Dudley Zoo, which will primarily be used by coaches.

Regeneration bosses at Dudley Council have announced the latest revamp in Castle Hill aimed at making it "a regional leisure destination".

They want to boost combined visitor numbers to one million people a year and bring in millions of pounds in extra revenue.

A listed office building attached to a Tecton building at the zoo will be refurbished, new parking spaces will be created and new signs, seats, lighting and planting will be installed.

Parking for the zoo will continue to be available throughout the work, which is due to be completed towards the end of 2014.

"We will be working with the local authority to ensure the phasing of any work is carried out to minimise disturbance to our customers," said Mr Suddock.

A 12-week consultation is under way. Cash for the project has come from Dudley Council, Dudley Zoo the Black Country Living Museum and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project was also awarded a £4.5m grant.

An artist's impression of how the new entrance to Dudley Zoo could look under the plans which were unveiled

How generations of visitors have come to know the entrance to the zoo with its distinctive curved roof

2012 among wettest

THE Met Office has confirmed 2012 was the second wettest year the country has seen since records began.

It was just a few millimetres short of the mark set in 2000. The official records go back 102 years.

The news comes as the River Severn has peaked at Bewdley. The exceptionally wet year was characterised by a dry start which quickly gave way to very wet weather, with April and June both being the wettest months on record.

NEWS in brief

Postbox has still not been delivered

RESIDENTS in Amblecote are still waiting on the return of their postbox – a year after it was removed.

Royal Mail has apologised for failing to keep its promise to reinstate it after the telegraph pole it was attached to in Vicarage Road was replaced in September 2011.

The company had initially said it would not replace it, but changed its mind after more than 300 people signed a petition against the decision.

Royal Mail spokesman Nick Martens said: "Royal Mail no longer installs postboxes on telegraph poles, therefore we have been looking for suitable alternative sites."

Horses break loose on road

POLICE were sent chasing four horses that had escaped from their farm, before running into the road and causing traffic delays. A number of drivers called police reporting that the horses were loose on the A442 road between Kidderminster and Shatterford near Bellman's Cross pub.

A police spokesman said after last Wednesday incident: "One call came from a driver about 6.45am who had hit a horse on the road. It had been dark so he hadn't realised it was a horse until he returned to the scene."

Patrols help to reduce speeding

EXTRA police patrols have been carried out in Lye following complaints by residents about speeding along Talbot Street. They also complained about cars illegally parking in the road.

Police said continuous patrolling in the area had reduced problems. Sgt Lynn Couldrey said officers would continue to hand out tickets to motorists breaking the law or causing a nuisance with their vehicles.

Groups for older people join up

GROUPS for older people in Dudley borough are joining forces with a national charity to improve services.

Age UK and Age UK Dudley, Age Concern Sedgley and District and My Time Over Fifties Stourbridge Friendship Centre will also campaign to influence local and national policy to improve later life for pensioners across the country.

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NEWS

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

A SURVEY by Waitrose reveals that most men haven't a clue how to cook toad in the hole. The secret, chaps, is to buy only the very freshest toads, available at any branch. Don't be afraid to ask.

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BINOCULARS used upside-down, eyes that changed colour from youth to old age, a too-modern car. The BBC spy yarn Restless has provided rich pickings for us sad old souls who enjoy spotting the errors. For me, the most obvious one was the restaurant scene featuring tables laid with damn great quarter-litre wine glasses. In wartime Britain, wine was sipped from small glasses. It was not until the 1970s that we learned to knock it back by the bottle.

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A REPORTER asks a councillor whether Birmingham Airport should be renamed in honour of Ozzy Osbourne and the councillor says: "It's an interesting idea and I've got an open mind." I bet there's as much chance of renaming the airport after Ozzy as there is of styling it after that other son of Brum, Enoch Powell. As a general rule, when you put a local hero's name above your airport, as with John Lennon in Liverpool or George Best in Belfast, the place is forever branded as second-rate and provincial. "Birmingham Airport" is a world brand and has a simple dignity. Don't mess with it.

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OUR changing language. They are drunken yobs for the other 364 nights of the year but at the New Year they become "revellers".

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THE NHS spends more than £5,000 million a year dealing with obesity. It is, in every sense, a growth industry. Now, the Royal College of Physicians claims the service is inadequate. In other words, we ought to spend a few billion more. The NHS was created to cure people who fall ill or infirm. Since when did stuffing your face become an illness? And why should we taxpayers fork out a fortune for people who could cure themselves simply by eating less?

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I COULD certainly eat a lot less of one cheese I was given over the festive peiod. Why, when you have made a perfectly good Cheshire cheese, would anyone add apple, ginger and Irish whiskey? Yuk.

❑❑❑❑❑❑❑❑

"THE sanctity of someone else's marriage has no effect on the sanctity of yours," declares a Daily Mail reader, in support of gay marriage. Oh, but it does. Right at the heart of the sanctity of marriage is the issue of adultery, a breach of trust so grave that it has always been grounds for divorce. It seems the new law will not recognise adultery in same-sex marriages. And if it doesn't apply to gays, how can it possibly apply to straight couples without creating discrimination? One early result of making same-sex marriage legal will be that the broken-hearted woman whose husband cheats on her and who can no longer bear to live with him will be told she cannot get a divorce. Does anyone remember voting for that?

Of course not. Same-sex marriage did not appear in any election manifesto at the last General Election. The nation is being bounced into it for no better reason than David Cameron thinks it will win a few gay votes.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Residents to have say in town revamp

REFURBISHED paths, public art installations and new planting are among plans for a revamp of High Street in Quarry Bank.

Councillors want to boost business along the main road by improving the shopping experience for those visiting stores. Calls have long been made for a regeneration scheme for the street, near the Merry Hill shopping centre.

Deputy council leader Shaukat Ali, the authority's regeneration boss, has announced details for a consultation and residents will be able to put forward ideas on improvements.

Public art and newly planted trees along the street close to shops are thought to be ways to help brighten surroundings.

Councillor Ali said: "I'm confident that the community and businesses will want to find out more about these early proposals and share their views with us.

"As a listening council we really value the input of our residents and we know that taking on board their aspirations and opinions serves to strengthen any future funding applications that we make."

A nature trail could also be created in the grounds of Christ Church, in High Street. The church is undergoing its own revamp. Parishioners celebrated the completion of a £12,000 scheme to improve the church entrance and restore brass in the building.

The public consultation will be held at Quarry Bank Community Centre, Sheffield Street, from January 19 to February 2.

£1m work to recreate old glory of parkland

WORK is under way on a £1 million masterplan to recreate flowing waterfalls and cascades in an 18th century parkland near Stourbridge ahead of its reopening.

Visitors will be allowed to walk through the Hagley Hall estate for the first time since the mid 1980s under plans.

The 350-acre parkland was closed to the public by the previous Lord Cobham, John Lyttelton, following a spate of vandal attacks.

Now the 12th viscount Cobham, Christopher Lyttelton, says reopening the 18th century Hagley Park is a priority within the next few years.

Works to restore the Wychbury Obelisk monument have been completed along with the restoration of the hall's original pitched roof.

The next stage of the plans sees the restoration of a landscaped cascades – a series of waterfalls running down to the Palladian bridge near St John's Church in the grounds of the hall.

But the stream needs to be cleared and better drainage created to allow the water to run through smoothly. Trees are being cuts back and silt removed from ornamental ponds to recreate the feature.

Work is expected to continue into the new year with the possibility of one or two mature trees being felled to re shape the land to its original state.

Once finished the cascades will feature in a series of walking trails for visitors throughout the 350 acre park.

"I'm delighted that the works are now under way as there are people who have put a lot of effort into this," said Lord Cobham.

"It has been fascinating for me to discover more about the parks as we are going along."

Burials in the hall's woodland is planned

WOODLAND bordering Stourbridge and Hagley may be transformed into a natural burial ground under plans to help pay for the restoration and reopening of the historic park.

Acres of forest on the 350-acre Hagley Hall estate opposite Old Halesonians Rugby Club, Wassell Grove Lane, have been offered for development.

Lord Cobham, whose family has owned the Hagley estate for around 250 years, has held talks with Liverpool firm GreenAcres Woodland Burials about leasing the woodland.

He said income from the scheme would be ploughed into restoring and redeveloping the parkland surrounding the stately home.

It would then be reopened to the public with around 70,000 visitors expected, helping to fund annual running costs of more than £250,000.

Unlike traditional cemeteries, natural burial grounds have no individual gravestones or stone memorials. Instead small plaques are hung from trees.

Details of the size of woodland to used and the nature of the development have yet to be revealed. Both parties said talks were in the "early stages" with planning permission required.

You shall go to the panto!

Ready for panto fun are Will Phipps, as Buttons, and Chelsea Little as Cinderella

THE magic of one of the best-loved fairytales will come to Stourbridge later this month for the annual pantomime.

Stourbridge Pantomime Company has promised to entertain the whole family with its version of Cinderella.

The company, which has been producing pantomimes for the public for more than 40 years, will perform the show at Stourbridge Town Hall Theatre, Crown Lane, from January 19 to 26.

Membership secretary Ann Williams said: "It is a hilarious traditional Cinderella pantomime, complete with ugly sisters, fairy godmother, Cinders and Buttons.

Awards

"We have some fantastic costumes and special effects, and a great set."

The lead roles in the production this year will be taken by Will Phipps who plays Buttons and Chelsea Little who will play Cinders.

The company has already received numerous awards for its pantos and won the best pantomime in the Black Country at the national Operatic and Dramatic Association West Midlands awards ceremony in April last year.

For tickets call 01384836963.

Leisure centres to take on staff

PLANS to create apprenticeships at leisure centres have been agreed.

Dudley Council said positions have been made because of a rising demand for jobs in the sports industry afer the Olympic Games.

Bosses want to recruit 10 apprentices to start work in April at leisure centres in Dudley, Stourbridge and Halesowen as well as The Dell Stadium, Brierley Hill.

The plans were agreed by cabinet member for human resources, law and governance Councillor Gay Partridge.

Recruits will learn customer service and centre facility maintenance overseen by the apprenticeship team in the corporate resources department.

After 12 month apprenticeships, recruits will be encouraged to apply for advanced apprenticeships if vacancies are available.

The council wants to recruit three apprentices each for the Crystal Leisure Centre, Stourbridge; Dudley Leisure Centre and Halesowen Leisure Centre and one for the Dell Stadium.

Councillor Partridge said recruitment would be through the National Apprenticeship Scheme and local schools and colleges.

New homes plan backed

PLANS for 19 homes on a former industrial site in Lye have been recommended for approval. Outline proposals for the High Street site have been submitted to Dudley Council.

The developer wants to build five houses and 14 flats. One letter of objection had been received from a neighbouring business, in Attwood Street, which uses loud power tools throughout the day and into the evening. Bosses said they did not want noise complaints from new neighbours.

The planning committee will discuss the scheme this week.

Ambulance plan

PLANS for an ambulance response unit in Kidderminster have been lodged with council chiefs. The service wants to provide a rest room for crews in Mill Street. It would be one of three bases in the town, replacing the station in Stourport Road.

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Serial bride Julie finds her Mr Right at fifth attempt

Marriages do not always work out – just ask Black Country bride-to-be Julie Cooper, who is preparing for her *fifth* wedding. **LOUISE JEW** met her

THE Abba song I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do could have been written with Julie Cooper in mind, as she prepares to wed for the fifth time.

The 55-year-old serial bride, nicknamed Elizabeth Taylor by her friends, has married in each of the last four decades – and is now engaged again this time to 61-year-old Paul Burcher.

"This time it's for keeps," she vows, sporting a sparkling new solitaire diamond ring. "I've fallen in love too quick a few times. But I love Paul to bits and want to settle down for good now."

Julie, originally from Kidderminster but now living in Ragees Road, Kingswinford, says it's certainly not wedding cake that keeps taking her back to the Register Office – she hates it. She joked: "It's the frilly frocks, which I never had when I was young.

"I've always worn white to my weddings before but this time it's going to be a red dress. They've always been from charity shops before, apart from the last one, which I bought for £50 from an advert.

"This time, it will be a designer dress, which Paul will buy, and we plan to marry next year in either Barbados or Mexico, probably on a beach."

Like every little girl, Julie once dreamed of a fairytale wedding – but, so far, none has quite matched up to that. Here, she talks through the saga of her marital career:

Wedding Number One

Julie fell for Leonard Maund when she was 16 and he was the brother of her next-door neighbour in Jubilee Drive, Kidderminster.

He was 19, seemed mature and he started giving her lifts to and from her job in a burger bar in Stourport.

"He lived on a farm in Tenbury Wells, which sounded to me like something from an Enid Blyton book – all home-made jam and collie dogs."

Leonard popped the question and they married at Kidderminster Register Office, then in Church Street, in September 1973.

However, life on the farm was not for Julie. "I hated chopping up chickens which ended up on the dinner plate," she said. Julie and Leonard split up in 1976 when she fell for another man – whom she did not end up marrying – and were divorced in 1979.

Wedding Number Two

Julie had just come through a relationship with Colin Mahoney, father of her son Jason, but he went off to work on oil rigs in Saudi Arabia and didn't come back.

She teamed up with another man but it was not going well – and then Derek Portman crossed her path and, after a whirlwind courtship, she moved in with him.

"He was my protector, and we got closer and closer," she said. They married in 1981 at Dudley Register Office.

She went on to have four children with Derek – Dean, born in 1984, Lena a year later, Penny in 1987 and Shane in 1992. But Julie says she and Derek did not exactly see eye to eye and, in 1995, she "did a bunk" with the children to live in a caravan on the Isle of Wight.

Wedding Number Three

Julie vowed she'd stay single after flitting to the isle. But it wasn't long before she came across Benny Cooper, who had got to know her sons while out fishing. The sons invited him around to their home – and the fisherman ended up hooking her.

"Benny was a laugh and we used to sing along on karaoke to 1950s and 60s records in the evenings," said Julie.

He proposed and they married in 1997 at an Isle of Wight register office. But, it was not an auspicious start when both bride and groom ended up in a police cell on their wedding night after they crashed their car. Their marriage also hit the rails and by 2003 Julie was divorced again.

Wedding Number Four

It was Benny – again. He came back into her life, wooed her and she agreed to remarry him. The ceremony took place in 2005 at Kidderminster Register Office. But by 2007, the marriage was on the rocks again and they divorced after she moved to Spring Parklands in Dudley.

Wedding Number Five . . . ?

Julie was determined to remain single yet again, but reckoned without running into old friend Paul Burcher at her daughter's home in Dudley in February 2010. They had last seen each other more than 30 years earlier, when he used to work with her second husband, Derek.

"I'd always had a thing for Paul but used to think he wouldn't give me the time of day," said Julie.

"But, after meeting him all those years later, he invited me to go to the pictures and we went to see a space film. It was the first proper date I'd ever been taken on. For my birthday, soon after we met, he bought me a bottle of champagne with chocolates and then, when we were on our way back from a few days in Hereford, he said he needed to go to the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham.

"We were both admiring the same ring in the window, he proposed, and bought it for me. We got engaged nearly two years ago, and this is the longest courtship I've had. I really want to settle down now."

Paul, who lives in Wombourne on a country estate next to Himley Hall, used to run a successful business, Leisure Care, of Stourport, which distributed video machines and jukeboxes to pubs. He is currently waiting for the decree absolute to a divorce from his wife of 20 years.

Courtship – with fiance Paul Burcher on a holiday in Ibiza

Julie in 1983 with her second husband Derek Portman and his sister-in-law Helen Turner

Julie Cooper shows off the with the dress she wore at her last wedding when she remarried Benny Cooper

Third husband – Julie with Benny Cooper, who she married for the first time on August 29, 1997

Back together again – Julie married her third husband, Benny Cooper, a second time in 2005

Fears over archives at library

HERITAGE societies fear that plans to move Kidderminster's Library Gallery to make way for offices could place the local history collection under threat.

Now 28 people from the societies have signed a letter seeking reassurances from Worcestershire County Council that the valuable historical archive held at the library will remain.

They fear creating office space for 130 social services staff would lead to the collection being transferred. They have written the county council calling for the collection to be kept in Kidderminster.

Their fears were dismissed by Wyre Forest District Council leader councillor John Campion who said there were no plans to move the archive section to the new library building in Worcester.

But he said there were some items at the library which might be "better placed" at the Museum of Carpet in Kidderminster.

He said: "The proposed changes are designed to protect services, including the historical and reference sections.

"To ensure we protect the library we need innovative projects."

Nigel Gilbert, of Kidderminster Civic Society, said: "There have been fears for some time about the local history collection."

Beauty spot audio trails

NEW audio trails have been created for beauty spots in Wyre Forest.

They are available to download from Worcestershire County Council's website. They have been produced by the Countryside for Dowles Brook, Upper Arley, Ribbesford and Wassell Wood.

Senior countryside access officer Rob Deri said: "The audio trails are a great way to keep fit and active and a new, fun way for visitors to experience the Wyre Forest. They're easy to download and could be perfect for a post-Christmas walk."

Plans for flats

PLANS for two apartment blocks in Lye have been lodged with Dudley Council. If the project is granted planning permission, they will be built on a plot of vacant land in Vicarage Road.

NEWS in brief

Library times will get new schedule

WORCESTERSHIRE County Council's mobile library service will be operating with new timetables from this month.

Stourport Library manager Maureen Hobbs said: "Worcestershire's mobile libraries are very popular and it's really important to our users that the service is there for them.

New timetables will be available soon on the county council website by visiting www.worcestershire.gov.uk /libraries from local libraries or by phoning the Worcestershire Hub on 01905 822722.

Action on path vow by council

ACTION is being taken to improve a countryside footpath to a new school in a village near Kidderminster.

It follows concerns raised by parents and local residents about muddy sections of the path, linking the village to the recently completed Chaddesley Corbett Primary School. The council is planning a permanent solution. In the meantime short-term remedial works are taking place.

Meeting to focus on cycling issues

CYCLISTS in Dudley have been invited to attend a meeting to discuss riding in the borough.

The forum will take place at the Dell Stadium in Brierley Hill on January 14.

It is open to anyone with an interest in cycling. People can give their views on issues around cycling.

The meeting will run from 6pm until 7.30pm.

Call 01384 815433.

New plan for old church hall gym

A FORMER church hall and ladies gym in Stourbridge looks set to be given a new lease of life as flats.

Miss-Fits gym in Lower High Street, closed in May after nearly 17 years.

Gym members said they were shocked to see the closure. But now plans have been backed for five flats by planning officers.

Extra patrols

EXTRA police patrols have been carried out in Lye following complaints about speeding cars.

Residents have reported vehicles travelling too fast along Talbot Street and about cars illegally parked.

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NEWS

Thieves raid home of grieving grandmother

THIEVES have ransacked the home of a grieving Kingswinford pensioner and stolen precious personal items – just days after the death of her granddaughter in a car crash.

The 83-year-old had returned to her home in Grantley Crescent to find it had been raided. It happened just days after her granddaughter, care assistant Samantha Jennings, aged 26, was killed.

The car the mother-of-two was in left the A449 near Kidderminster and hit a tree on December 8. Samantha's mother, Debbie Jennings, said the burglary which happened just over a week later on December 16 had caused huge upset at an already difficult time.

Samantha Jennings

"We are all heartbroken after losing Samantha in such a sudden and tragic way and then to find that this has happened to mum just days later is very difficult to take," she said.

"The burglars have stolen jewellery including my late father's wedding ring and his Rolex Hunter pocket watch. Both are of great sentimental value and irreplaceable. We just want them returned to us.

"I would hope that those who have done this were unaware of what the family was already going through, but that makes it no easier to get over."

The break-in is being investigated by Dudley CID and Det Con Julie Woollaston said: "The Jennings family is going through a very difficult time and it would mean a lot to them if they could just see their treasured heirlooms returned.

"We urge anyone in the area who knows anything, or who has been offered old jewellery or watches for sale in recent days, to contact us as soon as possible."

Police are available on 101.

Scheme fit for the young

Jess Potter and Tom Gadd promote junior deals at Stourbridge Leisure Centre

A NEW leisure membership scheme at pools in Dudley is aiming to get youngsters fitter.

The scheme will see a junior membership category for children, aged 17 and under, to help them save money while getting exercise and enjoying sports.

Councillor Tracy Wood said: "Our leisure centres offer excellent facilities at affordable prices and I'm sure this offer will encourage young people to take up regular exercise and enjoy the benefits of sport." A junior membership includes a free gym induction and unlimited access to lifestyles gyms, squash, table tennis and badminton courts at weekends.

It also includes public swimming times and a range of fitness classes.

Membership is available at the Crystal, Dudley and Halesowen leisure centres and costs £13 a month.

For more information call the leisure centres on 01384 812 800 or visit www.dudley.gov.uk/sport

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A working union between two dental professionals is helping to bring about life-changing outcomes. Retired sales director Clive was terrified of dentists. Read why now he's changed his view

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Clive's transformation

All smiles – Clive with wife Margaret

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CLIVE was so afraid of the dentist he plucked up all of his courage and begged him to extract all of his teeth so that he'd never have problems ever again.

That was more than 20 years ago, but what the retired sales director didn't know was that his tooth troubles were far from over.

Following the extractions dentures were fitted and he no problems for a few years. But the ageing process took its toll and Clive experienced stability problems with the lower denture as his gums receded. For five years he endured the embarrassment of ill-fitting teeth, sore spots and denying himself favourite foods.

Clive recalls his first dental nightmare: Stationed at Malta, the Royal Navy man suddenly had raging toothache. "I'd been drinking to dull the pain but as soon as I was back on board the duty dentists was summoned. He'd been drinking too and when he injected me broke off the needle in my gum. That was me finished with dentists." In recent years Clive had four denture relines to help the stability issues, but none provided a long-term solution.

Clive decided to have implant-retained dentures. He was referred by Steven Burchell Dip CDT RCS(Eng), whose Denture Clinic is based at North Street, Dudley, and in Tettenhall Road, Wolverhampton, to implantologist Mr Jonathon Pugh BDS MSc. Mr Pugh carried out the surgery and the prosthetics were hand-crafted by Mr Burchell.

Since having the implant-retained dentures, Clive has been able to bite into crispy apples and indulge himself with pork crackling. "It's the best money I've ever spent and it's been a real boost. I was dreading having it done, but I can honestly say I felt no pain at all," he says.

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LETTERS

We need a say over who we pay

IT is plain to see that the country cannot afford the 2.5 million (true figure nearer 4m) unemployed now.

It must also be noted that our European masters have said that we cannot withhold benefits and health care from European migrants, legal or otherwise, that come here and, also, they will be entitled to housing benefits child benefits and pension credits etc etc.

How on earth can we expect this country to support Europe's unemployed and their medical/housing needs when they get here?

Now is the time to call a halt to European dictates and take back control of our own country.

I voted to join the common market in the 70s for trade, only it was never put to me that I would be expected to be governed by people not elected by me and with no consideration to my people/nation but to milk us dry to support ideals that are great when someone else is paying for them.

If you fail to give us the vote then at least put in place stipulation that you have to pay into the benefit systems and the health systems for a period of no less than three years before you can get anything out of it. Also the maximum payment for benefits/housing should not exceed the takehome pay of the average working man who pays National Insurance/tax out of his net monies.

This country is a very tolerant one but the taxpayers and the people who care want to be allowed to pick and choose who and when people are allowed in, what they are entitled to and also those who need kicking out.

BRIAN J WILLIAMS
Wombourne

More must be done to wipe out fox hunts

SEEING on television that a hunt had been prosecuted and fined for fox hunting, it was pleasing to know that some action had been taken against these lawbreakers.

However, this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Every weekend these arrogant people gallop around the country and it would appear that there is no one to stop them.

Their actions are barbaric and should be stopped.

It has taken many years by many people including myself to make fox hunting with dogs illegal and I beg all readers if they see any of this going on to report it to the RSPCA or the police.

This vile practice must be wiped out.

KATH TIMMINS
Larch Road
Kingswinford

LETTERS to the Editor

POST
Stourbridge Chronicle, Chronicle Editorial, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1ES

E-MAIL
Stourbridge.chrons@expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number of the writer. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Bus stop drunks a bad image for city

CAN something be done about the half dozen or so drunks, and dog, that constantly congregate at bus stop in Market Street, Wolverhampton.

They are there at all hours of the day swigging super strength larger, swearing and even on occasion fighting, taking up seats intended for bus passengers (they never actually use the buses), and littering with their empty cans.

Recently one afternoon they were there as usual, almost up to fighting, their language was particularly foul, a mother was trying to move out of the way so that her young son was not subjected to their behaviour.

Last week I was speaking to a chap who had come into the city for a day out to have a look around, he couldn't believe this behaviour was tolerated and this was the image of our city he took away with him. I'm guessing he won't be back any time soon. Is there not an Alcohol Restricted Zone in place in this area and if there is, why is it not enforced?

I am sick to death of coming out of work every evening and having to witness this.

ELAINE FARMER
Dudley

Thanks to everyone who came to our aid

I WOULD like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who helped when my husband was taken ill at B & M Brierley Hill while out and about on Saturday December 22.

We were overwhelmed with offers of help and support.

Unfortunataly we do not have details of anyone who helped.

However starting with the gentleman who stopped his car to help; to the various members of B & M staff, customers – including the lady who called the ambulance – to the technicians who checked my husband over and gave him a clean bill of health.

We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone of you.

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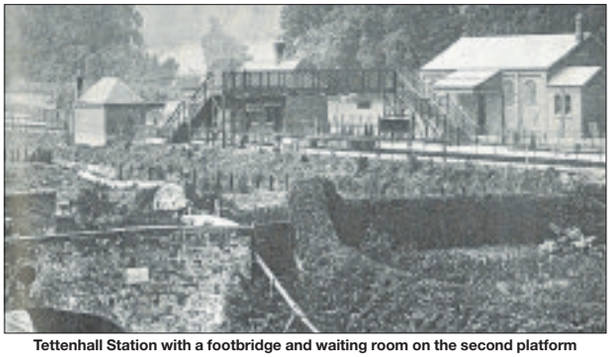

Tettenhall Station with a footbridge and waiting room on the second platform

A steam-pulled good train waiting at the station

Two houses in Meadowview Terrace were demolished for the new the rail line

Canalside terrace has seen the mode of transport change over 200 years

by Alec Brew

AT the foot of the Rock in Tettenhall lies a row of houses called Meadowview Terrace.

The main road runs on embankment at the rear of the houses, but this was not always so, as the main road used to be at the front.

It is now a quiet Wolverhampton cul-de-sac, facing the surviving buildings of the old Tettenhall Station, one of which, the old goods depot, is the centre of a proposal to create a transport heritage centre.

The importance of the location for such a venture does not only rest with the cluster of station buildings, though they represent the only Great Western Railway built station within the city's boundaries.

It has far more historically important factors, including what was once one of the most important transport crossing in England.

Two hundred years ago the road in front of Meadowview Terrace was the main London to Holyhead road (The Half-Way House, not far away, is half way between London and Holyhead, the main route to Ireland).

Adjacent to the terrace, in 1792, it crossed the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, the first East West bulk transport link.

Coaches carrying passengers for London to the Dublin ferry crossed the bridge, which is still there, before ascending Tettenhall ridge by a circuitous route around Lower Green.

Marks

Below them barges transported the coal and iron products of the Black Country to the West coast via the canal and then the River Severn.

Before the canal was built in 1792, small boats could be brought up from the Severn on the Smestow River, which lies right alongside the canal, and marks the boundary between Wolverhampton and Tettenhall. In 1800 the Act of Union with Ireland was passed, and the route to Holyhead became even more important.

The famous engineer, Thomas Telford was engaged to upgrade the whole length of it, and at Tettenhall this involved a deep cutting now known as The Rock, spreading the fill as an embankment to lessen the gradient.

This road has always been the No.1 route out of Wolverhampton, the No.1 tram route, horse-drawn and then electrified, and the No. 1 bus route.

But the people of Meadowview Terrace at least now enjoyed a quieter time at the front of their houses, that is until the railway came.

The Wolverhampton to Bridgnorth Railway was built either side of the First World War, and cut right through the terrace.

Two houses being demolished to make way, and the residents on either side had night coal trains from Baggeridge passing within feet of their bedrooms.

The railway never reached Bridgnorth, the spur from Wombourne was never built, and though passenger railcars ran for seven years in the 1920s the demand was never there. The railway through Tettenhall became a goods, line, a useful by-pass to the built up areas of the Black Country for munitions trains in the Second World War.

Its short life came to an end in the 1960s and the tracks were taken up.

The route became the Valley Park cycle and walking route, and the station buildings house the Park Rangers, all except the derelict goods depot, now up for let.

Needed

There is a proposal, led by the Staffordshire Aircraft Restoration Team, to turn the depot into a volunteer-run transport heritage centre, something the city has long needed.

It would tell the story of all aspects of Wolverhampton's important transport history, but particularly, the story which lies right there in front of Meadowview Terrace

● Photographs for this feature came from Ned Williams' book, The Railway to Wombourne

The derelict goods depot awaiting a new use

The bridge over the canal, once a vital crossing

Dan Brew, ganger in charge of the line through Tettenhall, on his trolley in the 1930s

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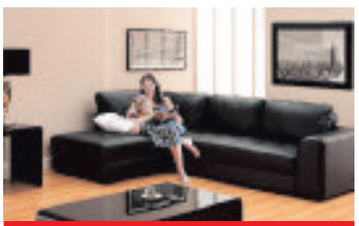

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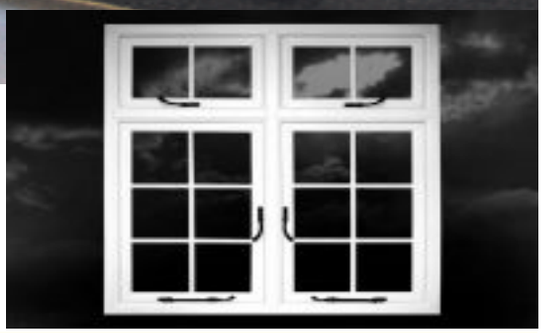

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NEWS

Action to repair wall at last after a year's delay

A GROUP of residents who have put up with barriers outside their homes for more than a year after cracks appeared in an old wall, have been told action is being taken to deal with the problem at last.

Traffic on South Road, at its junction with Charles Road, Stourbridge, has been disrupted since the 20-yard stretch was fenced off in November 2011.

In high winds, some of the plastic barriers blew into the path of cars.

It was hoped work would start in February or March and Councillor Khurshid Ahmed, Dudley Council cabinet member for housing, apologised for the delay.

He said: "Work to start rebuilding it has taken longer than anticipated because it has required specialist design due to the wall being so close to the road, the council having to locate utility services and the need to relocate a gas pipe."

Jayne Whiley and Andy Small

The spot is busy with parents taking their children to the nearby Gig Mill Primary School and with walkers using the Swan Pool Park.

National Grid has said it will start work on January 28 to divert the pipe, which will take about three days. The wall will then be rebuilt by council contractors.

Jayne Whiley, aged 59, who with neighbour Andy Small, collected a 100-name petition calling for action, said: "The fencing has created a blackspot because motorists turning out of Charles Road can't see. It's so dangerous for children going to school."

Ghetto

Another resident, Fazana Shaheen, aged 37, who has a 10-year-old daughter, Sasha, said: "It looks like we are living in a ghetto and it's dangerous for children going to school – it's a nightmare."

National Grid spokesman Jane Taylor said: "We were told about the problem only on August 22 and had hoped to divert the pipe in November – but unfortunately that had to be delayed because of our workload."

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NEWS

Hoax fire calls drop but still above 3,000 a year

MORE than 3,000 hoax calls were received by West Midlands Fire Service in12 months, new figures have now revealed.

The service received the calls in the financial year 2011/2012, and although this number is expected to have dropped dramatically in this financial year' which runs from April through to March, fire chiefs expect to have received close to 1,000 hoax calls.

In 2011/2012 the service received 3,313 hoax calls, sending engines to 1,128 of the false incidents.

This was only slightly down on the previous year when they received 3,554 hoax calls, and sent engines out 1,457 times. Fire Control staff will actively challenge people if they suspect them of being hoax callers.

The service's sophisticated computer software will also alert staff if a certain phone number or address has been used in a hoax call before.

Sandwell councillor and Fire Authority chairman John Edwards said: "It just gives us a little more information to help us challenge a caller to check to see whether it is a hoax.

"We are bringing the number of hoax calls we go to down, but there are still too many."

He added: "I expect the drop in the number of hoax calls is due to education in schools about the danger and seriousness of the calls."

Under a new scheme, fire control staff at the service's headquarters in Birmingham also operate a call challenge system when automatic fire alarms activate, to assess whether there is a need to send a fire engine.

This does not apply to premises where people's lives could be at risk.

Students take plunge

KIDDERMINSTER College students reached new heights during a rock-climbing day at a Bewdley landmark. Twelve abseiled down Blackstone Rock as part of their uniformed public services diploma course.

Rain brings down wall

Villager Bob Clarke stands near the collapsed wall on Mill Lane, Kinver

THE wet weather has taken its toll on a wall in Kinver causing it to collapse on to a main route into the village. Safety barricades have now been put up around the landslide spot in Mill Lane.

Piles of rubble still remain at the site and inspectors from Staffordshire County Council have visited to assess the damage.

Temporary traffic lights have also been installed to allow motorists to drive around the bricks. The road had to be closed for several days before being and reopened.

Villager Bob Clarke said the landslide had happened just before Christmas. "It has no doubt been caused by all of the rain we've been having," he said.

He added the closure had left the village cut off as traffic was forced to follow a one and a half-mile detour.

On Christmas Eve there was a landslide at Red Hill, off Brook Road, Stourbridge.

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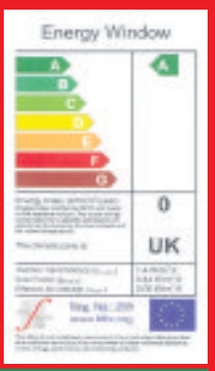

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NEWS

Simon Barsby, Tim Childe, Simon Brothwood, Stephen Bagley, Jon Pettit and Craig Bagley, of the 4x4 Unit

Life-saving responders need extra 4x4 drivers

THEY'VE rescued people from floods, plucked householders trapped by snow to safety and even helped victims of fire – now these life-saving volunteers are looking for members to join their team.

By day they are usually sat behind desks in their normal jobs, but The West Midlands 4x4 Response Group can be called out an any time to help in a crisis.

The 20-strong team, made up of people ranging from from 20 to 60, use their 4X4 off road vehicles to help out the emergency services to rescue those who are in trouble, and to transport medical and support staff around the region in bad weather.

The group, which has been running for three years, aims to provide transport when ordinary vehicles are not able to cope with the conditions.

Group chairman Simon Brothwood said there were agreements with a number of organisations including West Midlands Ambulance Service, the BADGER out of hours doctor service, West Midlands Fire Service and the South Staffordshire Civil Contingency Unit, which calls them out when needed.

Stranded

Since forming,Stranded the group has been called to 280 incidents in the region.

During the bad snowfall in the winter of 2010/11 they were on the road recovering stranded ambulances and transporting doctors and nurses who would otherwise not be able to get to work to hospitals across the region.

In March last year the team rescued a group of vulnerable adults who were trapped by the snow in the Peak District.

In September when arsonists targeted farmland near Himley Hall, Himley the team were called on to help out. The fire service had 60 fire fighters at the scene but needed help to transport personnel from one place to another.

Mr Brothwood, aged 34 and from Rubery, works as a contracts manager and his fellow group members include charity workers, truck drivers, mechanics, policemen and civil servants.

He said: "We are often put on standby, for example if we know there is bad weather coming, and we can let our bosses or colleagues know. We want to have members in every area of the West Midlands."

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NEWS

Vascular ops transferred to specialist hospital unit

MORE patients will receive vascular surgery at Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital in the second phase of plans to create a specialist centre for the Black Country.

Surgeons have started carrying out some procedures at the site but from spring all emergency and planned operations will be done there.

Health chiefs wanted to set up the centre because evidence showed patients having complex vascular surgery have a much better chance of survival if their operation is carried out at a specialist centre.

Vascular conditions are related to blood vessels and include hardening of the arteries.

Since July emergency vascular ops and planned surgery for abdominal aortic aneurysms for patients from Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall have taken place at the centre.

Success

From April all other planned vascular procedures such as bypasses for circulation problems and surgery on the arteries in the neck, will also be done there.

Atiqur Rehman, of the Black Country Vascular Centre, said: "Phase one has gone well and we are treating patients with great success.

"Surgeons have been coming from Walsall and Wolverhampton since July 2012 to do emergency vascular operations and some planned surgery and they will continue to come here to carry out major vascular operations from April 2013."

Day case surgery, such as varicose vein ops, will continue to take place at the other hospitals as well as in Dudley along with outpatient appointments.

Father inspires Sue's trek

Sue Boex, who is fundraising in memory of her father Philip Green, inset

A STOURBRIDGE woman had been inspired by her father to take part in a charity trek in the Atlas Mountains for the Alzheimer's Society.

Sue Boex, aged 66, of Wrekin Drive, said: "I have to do this because my father died with this cruel disease and I have many friends and family who are also suffering from various types of dementia."

In 2008 Mrs Boex trekked in the Himalayas, raising £4,000. In November 2011, she trekked in the Sinai Desert for the society.

She said: "I'm getting on a bit, so this will be very challenging."

Mrs Boex hopes to do her trek in Morocco between September 14 and 22 and is hoping to raise at least £2,500 for the Alzheimer's Society before then.

The society is a care and research charity which supports people with Alzheimer's Disease and their families and carers.

She said: "Dementia research is so important and has been poorly funded in the past. But we need to raise money to help the care of patients and for research into a cure to give people hope when they are given a diagnosis."

Mrs Boex's website for donations is www.justgiving.com/Sue-Boex1

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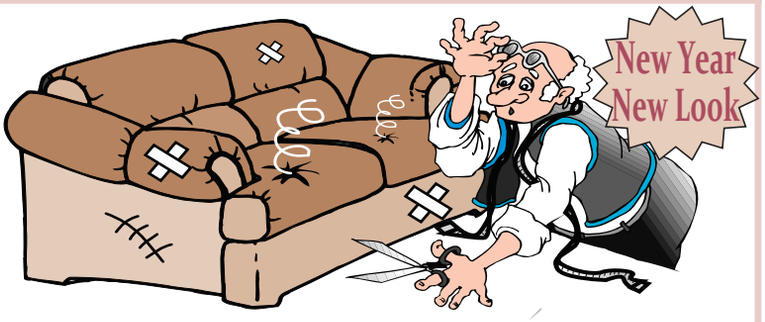

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NEWS

Councils take back staff they made redundant

HUNDREDS of workers who were cut from councils, including Dudley, and received combined payouts of at least £3.5 million have since been re-employed by the same authorities.

A total of 354 staff were made redundant from councils in the West Midlands and Staffordshire and then taken back in other roles. The figures were released under the Freedom of Information Act.

Dudley Council slashed 15 posts where the workers were later re-employed. Eleven of the subsequent contracts were for temporary work, and 10 of those staff are still with the authority.

Bosses refused to reveal the cost of payouts, saying it was personal information.

More than half of the numbers re-employed were at Staffordshire County Council, which cut 185 staff and later brought them back since 2008/09. Combined redundancy payments for the axed staff was more than £3.4m, with 16 of the payouts topping £50,000.

Wolverhampton City Council meanwhile axed 138 people who bosses said were later "re-engaged". They included three former deputy headteachers.

Walsall re-employed 10 staff, six as agency staff and four as employees, with their original redundancy payouts costing a combined £123,769.

Staffordshire council bosses defended their decisions, saying 43 per cent of those axed only came back on a casual basis and 55 per cent came back under the council's wing after six months.

Service for Round Oak

A SERVICE to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the closure of Brierley Hill's Round Oak steelworks will take place on January 23 at Brierley Hill Methodist Church, Bank Street at 7.30pm. The plant was founded by Lord Ward, later the Earl of Dudley, in 1857.

Youngsters are on the ball

Front Arthur Passey, behind, from left, Lucas Whitehouse and Noah Attwood, coach Dave Homer, Jake Cook and Harrison Arkell

YOUNGSTERS at a Kidderminster nursery have been showing off their fancy footwork during football training sessions.

Staff at the Railway Children nursery at Station Approach, Kidderminster decided to include football as part of their activities and the sessions have proved such a hit that they are to be continued.

The nursery caters for up to 38 children, aged between three months and five years old, in any one day. Football sessions take place on Wednesday afternoons. Ann Whitby, the manager of the centre, who helped found the charity nursery 28 years ago, said: "Coach Dave Homer, from Stourbridge, takes the football sessions for youngsters from nearly three old to five years old.

"We decided to introduce football about 12 months ago so the children would have a male role model.

"The youngsters learn new skills, have lots of fun."

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NEWS

Girl's cat killed after she wins safety prize

Hannah with pet cat Thomas. She was devastated when he was run over

Hannah's winning safety poster

A SCHOOLGIRL'S pet cat was run over and killed just days after she won a road safety poster competition.

Hannah Alfrey was devastated when her two-year-old ginger cat Thomas was knocked down in her street, Farndale Close, Brierley Hil.

Her mother criticised inconsiderate drivers and urged them to take more care.

Hannah, aged 11, a pupil at Peters Hill Primary School, won a police-run poster contest just before Christmas to warn drivers of the risks of careless parking near schools. Less than a week later, Thomas was run over.

Hannah's mother, Michelle Tromans, aged 38, said: "It's just drivers being lazy and inconsiderate. "They just don't look and they just don't think."

Mrs Tromans said it had been very upsetting for Hannah and the family. She said Thomas was the third cat belonging to the family to be run over in the street since they moved there 12 years ago.

She added: "It looks like a quiet street but it's actually really busy. The volume of traffic is just so dangerous. It's even worse by the school – people park on the cross hatch and by the roundabout. They reverse along the pavement and they pull out without looking.

"The police are there a lot and they give people tickets but it doesn't seem to make any difference."

Some years ago Mrs Tromans was among those who signed a petition calling for speed humps to be installed, but they were told that they would be too expensive.

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NEWS

Ducks off, water's back as river levels hit event

Bewdley mayor, John Latham, with Lions president Terry White, best dressed duck winner, George Harding, second-place is Ozzy Beswick, both from Bewdley
– Picture by Colin Hill

The barricades in place in Bewdley as the River Severn swells creating high water levels

The extent of the swell, as indicated by the covered up arches of the bridge

ORGANISERS of Bewdley's traditional duck race are hopeful of rescheduling the event for later in the year after it was postponed due to the swollen River Severn.

Following weeks of heavy rain andwith the river still yet to reach its peak, Kidderminster and District Lions Club was forced to cancel Tuesday's New Year event .

The club has been hosting the race for around 20 years and it was the first time it has been called off.

Talks are now under way to re-arrange the race with Easter Bank Holiday weekend among the suggestions. The Environment Agency said the river level was expected to peak at more than 4.12 metres.

Flood barriers are in place along Severnside North and South and officials said they were continuing to monitor the situation. The race was postponed due to fears for the safety of canoists who gather the ducks after the event.

Despite the New Year's Day race being called off, a couple of youngsters still turned out with their homemade ducks for the fancy dress competition.

Terry White, president of the Kidderminster and District Lions Club said said everyone had been "disappointed" it could not go ahead.

But he praised the the two youngsters – George Harding and Ozzy Beswick, both aged three, for still turning out with their colourful creations and were rewarded with prizes.

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Church-fight campaigners need support

A CHURCH preservation group in Dudley is on the lookout for sponsors for its weekly market stall.

Campaigners attend the town's market every Saturday in a bid to raise funds to help re-open St John's Church in Kates Hill.

But proceeds have dipped and organisers are appealing for kind-hearted people or businesses to sponsor the stall to cover the rent.

This will enable all the cash raised to go straight to the funds to restore and re-open the church. The stall had been raking in up to £250 each Saturday but this has now fallen to around £130.

Chairman of St John's Church Preservation Group Deb Brownlee said: "To help us stay on the market we are asking for sponsors for the £22.56 weekly rental.

"They can be businesses, individuals, in memory of, or anonymous. We have a sponsor board on the stall and we give them advertising for the week through our Facebook page," she said.

"The sponsorship makes a huge difference not just to our income for the day, but to the morale of the volunteers."

The group plans to carry out the restoration work in small stages.

Anyone interested in sponsoring can register at savestjohn church@hotmail.co.uk or by calling 07871 195042.

Black Country gives a paramedic lesson

A NORWEGIAN paramedic has been learning from his counterparts in the Black Country how lives are saved here.

Advanced paramedic Lee Farley was joined by Norwegian Paramedic Hans Sigvart Hansen for a 4.30pm – 2.30am shift on a rapid response car in the Black Country.

Mr Sigvart Hansen, who was visiting the UK for the third time, works for Vinjes Ambulance Service based in Hommelvik, Sor-Trondelag.

In the quiet mountainous region, the nearest hospital is two hours away.

Dudley-based paramedic Mr Farley said: "It was really interesting to find out about the differences between the two services.

"It was clear that the main difference was the shift work: in Norway they do 24-hour shifts and every few weeks of their rota they start on Friday and finish on Monday.

"Hans said they are trained to use a lot more drugs than our paramedics as they are so remote and miles away from the nearest hospital.

"With mountains in the area they cover, they are obviously equipped with snow mobiles and six wheeled ambulances which contain three day survival packs for prolonged rescues and in case adverse weather hampers their journey."

Hope

The two were also able to compare weather conditions, with the top temperature during Mr Sigvart Hansen's UK shift reaching two degrees.

This was toasty compared to his average shift in Norway at this time of year, where temperatures usually linger around the -33 degrees mark.

It is hoped Mr Sigvart Hansen can visit again next year.

Paramedic Hans Sigvart Hansen who spent time in the Black Country

Hotel wants to expand its wedding days

A HOTEL on a country house estate near Kidderminster has unveiled major expansion plans to cater for larger wedding parties and conferences after turning away bookings. Up to 12 jobs will be created in the move at Brockencote Hall.

Bosses at the Chaddesley Corbett venue want to install a permanent marquee and more spacious facilities to enable them to cater for 200 guests due to a lack of room for bookings of more than 80 people, which is losing it thousands of pounds in business.

The venue is licensed for civil weding ceremonies and can accommodate up to 42 overnight guests .

Owners Eden Hotel Collection have submitted plans to Wyre Forest District Council. It states the hotel had received more than 30 inquiries from people interested in holding a function in excess of 80 people.

It said the marquee-style function room would help to "secure Brockencote Hall's place as a nationally recognised resort hotel".

Eden Hotel Collection bought the property for £3 million in 2011 and managing director Mark Chambers said: "Since we bought the hotel, it's gone from strength to strength. There's a huge demand for weddings in the high end market and we're trying to respond to that demand."

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NEWS

Purrfect Ann is nominated for charity award

A DEDICATED animal volunteer has been nominated to receive an award for her commitment to the PDSA.

Ann Evans, aged 69, from Codsall, has been shortlisted for the charity's Special Achievement award.

Mrs Evans has spent the last two years giving her time to the charity by helping out in their public relations office, sending out letters and carrying out research.

PDSA's PR manager Deryck Wilson, who nominated retired secretary Ann for the award, said that despite suffering major health issues in the past year she remained dedicated to the charity.

He said: "Ann really does care for the charity and will do her best to spend as much time helping us as she can."

Ann Evans, from Codsall, with rescue cat William

Table top sale to aid funds

A TABLE top sale is due to be held at Codsall Village Hall on Sunday, January 20.

Books, clothes, toys and CD's will be on sale from 12pm and stallholders can arrive at 11am.

Prices for tables start at £6 and admission is 50p for adults. Profits will go to village hall funds. For details phone 01902 843412 or email manager@codsallvillagehall.co.uk

Chance to go on pilgrimage

MEMBERS of a Codsall church are planning a tour of Taizé in France this summer.

A nine-day pilgrimage has been organised by Holy Cross Church on Bilbrook Road and is open to people aged between 15 and 35.

Anyone interested in joining the visit should phone 01902 847069 or for more details email hannah@holycross.bilbrook.info

Honour for stroke victim who turned into a helper

A WOMAN who has battled back after a devastating stroke is now helping other sufferers – and has been honoured with a special certificate. Chris Charles, from Stourton, now volunteers for Dudley Stroke Association.

by Louise Jew

She helps in its Pensnett office, taking on the roles of trustee and committee member and knitting to raise money.

Now she has received a "Life After Stroke" certificate, which was presented to her by ITV's Central Tonight's Bob Warman.

Chris, aged 69, suffered a stroke five years ago, leaving her with mobility problems, short-term memory loss and slurred speech.

Despite suffering two "mini strokes" since, during 2011, she has carried on devoting herself to helping others.

She said: "I feel very humble to have received a certificate. I have been trying to rebuild my life and started volunteering for the Stroke Association to give something back for the help I've received from the group."

Chris used to be carer to her husband David, who was forced to retire from his job as a Wombourne police officer about 20 years ago after a road accident.

She was among nine West Midlands people who were presented with "Life After Stroke" certificates after being nominated by family and friends.

At the ceremony, Bob Warman said "A stroke can have a devastating impact on people's lives but Chris has truly shown that there is life after stroke. She has shown great courage."

Nominations for the 2013 awards can be made by calling 0207 566 1540 or by sending an email to lasa@stroke.org.uk

Stroke survivor and award-winner Chris Charles with TV presenter Bob Warman

Sleigh pulls in £1,500

STOURBRIDGE and Brierley Hill Round Table's annual Christmas sleigh outings raised nearly £1,500 for charity. The money will be donated to Living Springs, based at Stourton, near Stourbridge, which provides care and support to vulnerable children and their families. Round Table chairman Dan Saunders said: "We are delighted to have raised this amount."

Traditional theme to fundraiser

TETTENHALL & District Round Table is putting on an evening of traditional Scottish dance to raise money for life-limited children.

Kilt-wearing dancers will fill Tettenhall Wood United Reform Church, on Mount Road, for the Céilidh on January 26 at 7.30pm.

In keeping with the traditional Gaelic theme, haggis neeps and tatties will be served up.

Potential

And Birmingham musicians The Burdock Band will be on hand to provide live music.

Richard Unwin, social secretary of Tettenhall & District Round Table, said: "We're looking for potential members to come along but everyone is welcome."

Tickets cost £15. To book, call Richard Unwin on 07889 807367. The money will go to the Round Table Children's Wish charity.

New station for police briefings

TETTENHALL police are to begin holding their morning briefings in Pendeford in an effort to improve efficiency.

The Tettenhall Regis & Wightwick team will be parading with Oxley officers at the Pendeford police station from January 21.

A police spokesperson said the move would not affect patrol numbers and police would return to work as normal after their initial meetings.

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CLUB NEWS

Party is a popular occasion

WOLLASTON E TOWNSWOMEN

CAROL services at Cobden Street Methodist Church, Wollaston and St Thomas Church, Stourbridge, during which the Wollaston Guild choir performed, were both successful occasions.

Proceeds from the service at Cobden Street Church will be sent to a childrens' charity, to be decided by the committee.

December 14 saw the Guild enjoying the annual Christmas party. Under the guidance of chairman Jean Latham and the committee, the party format was changed and proved to be popular with members – one to be repeated.

More than 60 members attended, together with guests from neighbouring Guilds, namely Federation, Norton, Oldswinford, Kingswinford and Grange.

Background Christmas music was played throughout the evening, and after an extensive raffle – prizes going to a mixture of members and guests – the even-ing passed quite quickly.

The competition involved a Christmas candle, and this was won by Peggy Homer.

At the meeting on January 8, John Billingham was speaking on Images of Worcestershire.

The competition involved a picture or photograph of Worcestershire.

The meeting place is St James Church Hall, Wollaston and non-members are most welcome.

Christmas diners get ukulele entertainment

Christmas fare at Fairlawns Hotel & Spa for Pat Whittaker, Margaret Tolley and Peggy Green

PELSALL E TOWNSWOMEN

LUNCH Club friends had a very enjoyable Christmas dinner at the Old Irish Harp, Chester Road, Aldridge, on November 27. The next lunch will be at Farmer John's, Aldridge Road, Streetly, on January 29.

The festive season started well with a trip to Trentham Gardens. There were plenty of opportunities for seasonal bargains and some wonderful decorations available.

On December 6, guild members were welcomed to Fairlawns Hotel & Spa, Little Aston Road, for a superb Christmas lunch with entertainment provided afterwards by Gabriela the Ukulele Lady.

An outstanding performance by the Federation Choir enhanced a beautiful Federation carol service, led by the Rev Phil Hoar, at St John's Church, Bloxwich.

The December meeting was a festive buffet. Donations were made to the Birmingham Children's Hospital in lieu of cards and the evening finished with a 'connecting word' quiz – with about 10 winners.

On January 17, Margaret Smallman will talk about 'Growing Up in a Corner Shop". The competition is a decorative tin.

Food Bank items collected

DUDLEY LIONS CLUB

DUDLEY Lions Club wishes to say thank you to Tesco Extra Burnt Tree and all its customers who donated Items of food and money to our charity food collection at the store on December 8/9.

Monies donated were spent on food items to add to the food collection. A massive 663.1kg of food items and 8kg of non-food items was collected over the two days which was then passed on to the Black Country Food Bank where it will be used to assist families and individuals who are in need.This is 33 per cent up on our collection of last year.

We would like to say thank you to you all for their kindness and generosity.

Best Wishes for the New Year from everyone at Dudley Lions.

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NEWS

Finals on the cards

Nick John, has reached the finals of a poker competition

A KIDDERMINSTER card sharp is hoping he will be dealt a great hand after making it through to the national finals of a poker contest.

Father-of-two Nick John, aged 36, who works as a physiologist at the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford, was successful in the regional finals of the Red Tooth Poker League held at Star City in Birmingham.

He is now through to the next round of the tournament which will see him trying to win his way to Las Vegas and a jackpot of $100,000 US.

He was among three poker players who take part in tournaments at Carters Bar, Kidderminster and who made it through to the regional finals which saw 200 people trying to battle their way through to the nationals in Sheffield.

Others taking part included Adam Lyntch and George Macklin also from Kidderminster. Nick started playing poker about 10 years ago. He said: "If I make the final 10 at Sheffield I will get a seat at Las Vegas." The finals will be held later in the year.

Widow's plea on funding for upkeep of memorial

A WIDOW from Dudley who funded a memorial to a band of previously unrecognised sailors in the Second World War is appealing for help to pay for its maintenance.

Phyllis Coyle, aged 85, used £17,000 from her own savings to pay for the monument which was unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, in August.

The memorial is a tribute to the sailors who risked their lives to deliver supplies to Russia on long, dangerous Arctic Convoys in the war.

Among the men was Mrs Coyle's husband Mick, whose dying wish was for proper recognition for their work. Mr Coyle died, aged 85, last year,

Mrs Coyle has now started fundraising after she received a £6,500 bill to pay for the maintenance of the memorial.

She has paid half of it thanks to donations from friends, but is now appealing for the remainder of the cash to secure the monument's future.

She said: "I've sent letters to more than 200 people asking for help to maintain the memorial.

Widow Phyllis Coyle

"There was nothing for this brave group of men before this monument, and there would be nothing standing in this country if it went."

Mrs Coyle, of Pensnett, received a major boost after Prime Minster David Cameron promised to present medals in their honour.

Anyone who can support the fund should contact 01384 572405.

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This is followed by a short drive to Versailles where you can visit the majestic palace home of Louis XIV (admission payable locally) and the typically provincial French market town of Versailles itself.

During the evening the coach will take you on a tour of Paris 'By Night'. The whole city is a work of art with monuments and buildings illuminated with the majestic Eiffel Tower dominating the skyline.

The next morning a visit is made to one of the most picturesque and atmospheric quarters of Paris, Montmartre, home of the artists and street entertainers, with of course the whole area dominated by the white domed basilica of the Sacre-Coeur.

There will also be free time in the city. Perhaps take a trip up the Eiffel Tower, a cruise on the River Seine, a browse amongst the antique shops, a wander around the picturesque gardens or take your time to visit Paris' incredible range of attractions.

INFO

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- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Certain entrance fees payable locally

Organised by Riviera Travel (ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430)

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- Visit to Chester
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Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

Strawberry Fields and Penny Lane

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PRICE FROM £99

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Organised by Newmarket Promotions (ABTA V787X)

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- Overnight sleeper train from Moscow to St Petersburg
- Guided tours of Moscow and St Petersburg
- Optional excursions available
- Services of a tour manager
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Easter break Walking on the Gower and Pembrokeshire Coast

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- Single rooms subject to availability -supplement applies

Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

The Thriplow Daffodil weekend

Two days departing March 16

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- Overnight half-board accommodation
- Visit to the Thriplow Daffodil weekend
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- Services of a tour driver
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- Services of a tour manager
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

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View from the Shard

Two days departing July 20, October 5

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- Free time in London
- Services of a tour driver
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

NEWS

Police to act after trees cut down at beauty spot

POLICE have pledged to act to stop people chopping down trees for firewood at a beauty spot.

More than 50 trees have been felled at the Coombeswood Wedge, between Mucklow Hill and Gorsty Hill, Halesowen, in recent months.

The Friends of Coombeswood conservation group believes the damage is being caused by people wanting free fuel for wood-burning stoves.

Sgt Martin Hall, of Halesowen North policing team, said: "Residents made us aware of several trees cut down. It disappoints me to think that there are some people who think it is acceptable to take a saw on to our open spaces and remove trees and branches.

"Anyone caught doing this will face the appropriate action. I would urge anyone who has any information about people doing this to contact us."

The Friends of Coombeswood have put up notices warning that felling is illegal after finding that willow, hazel and ash trees had been cut down. Much of the felling has taken place on Monarch's Way, a long distance footpath along which King Charles II fled after defeat at the Battle of Worcester.

Many of them are among a large number of trees that were planted about 20 years ago by Halesowen Abbey Trust at the beauty spot, which covers more than 100 acres.

Sue Yeadon, chairman of the Friends of Coombeswood, said that, besides marring the beauty of the area, the illegal felling created a danger of tripping over discarded branches for walkers.

Business group meeting

A NETWORKING group for businesswomen in Worcestershire will hold its next meeting on January 15.

The informal get together will take place at The Hop Pole Inn in Bewdley from 10am.

Members usually meet on the third Tuesday of every month.

A happy new 100th year

Muriel Glynn with great-grandchildren Max and Lucy Tipson, grand-daughter Joanna Tipson, and husband Keith Tipson, daughter Janis Bayley, and her son- in-law Howard Bayley, also staff leader Jessy Joseph and Roselyn Matthews

CROSSWORD fan Muriel Glynn celebrated her 100th birthday on New Year's Day, surrounded by family and friends.

Mrs Glynn, who has lived at the Lakeview Care Home, Great Wyrley for the past four years, was born and grew up in Netherton, Dudley, with her brother William.

She married husband Ernest at St Andrew's Church, Netherton, in June 1940. Her daughter and son-in-law, Janis and Howard Bayley, and her two grandchildren and five great-grandchildren celebrated the special day with her. Mrs Glynn worked as a secretary at a car firm and was a keen bridge player.

Care home activities coordinator Rosalyn Matthews said Mrs Glynn is a popular figure at the home.

She said: "She's a lovely lady. She's always got a crossword book in her hand."

star extra TRAVEL

Day excursion, Saturday 8 June 2013

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NEWS

Private treatment on NHS costs £8m

MORE than £8 million was spent on private treatment for Black Country NHS patients in 12 months, figures reveal.

Hundreds in Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall and Sandwell requested to be treated at a private hospital. Under government rules, they can choose where they go for some scans and procedures if the cost is not above that for treatment at an NHS site.

Patients can have shorter waiting times and individual rooms for procedures, such as hip replacements and diagnostic scans.

In 2011/12, the Black Country cluster of PCTs, which looks after health services in the region, spent a total of £8,579,310 on private treatment.

The bill was highest in Dudley – £4,460,375. In Walsall, £1,819,000 was spent, Wolverhampton spent £1,264,315 and Sandwell £1,035,620.

Les Williams, director of operations for the Black Country NHS Cluster, said: "Using private sector providers helps us to reduce waiting times and gives patients a greater choice of where to go for treatment.

"Sending patients to private providers doesn't cost us any more than it would if they were treated by an NHS organisation as the same tariff is paid wherever the treatment is carried out."

Doubt raised over Kristian club move

THE relocation of the gymnastics club which put Kristian Thomas on the road to Olympic glory has been plunged into doubt.

Concerns have been raised about the safety of children at the new site.

Earls Gymnastics Club wants to move from its Halesowen base to Westminster Industrial Estate in Netherton.

Organisers say the move will not only secure the club's future, but reduce membership waiting lists and help it provide better gymnastic facilities.

But the boss of a fabrication company based on the estate has objected to the club's planning application.

In a letter to Dudley Council, Profab managing director Bernard Simkins said he feared lorries and forklift trucks at the industrial estate would pose a danger to children.

Hazard

He said: "It is not our intention to hinder what is an excellent club. However, we believe this industrial estate is not suitable for the general public and this use.

"The car parking allocated would give insufficient room for large articulated lorries to gain proper access. Again, this would be a safety hazard for vulnerable pedestrians, especially children."

Mr Simkins said a barrier could be put up to fence off the gym building from the rest of the estate, but he said he believed this would not be financially viable.

The gymnastics club, currently based at Earls High School, has about 550 members and 11 employees.

Kristian Thomas, of Wednesfield, trained there and won bronze at London 2012.

Club chairman John Caulwell declined to comment on the objection, but said: "We have other options we are looking at, but none are as advanced as this one."

Bee course offer

A BEGINNER course in beekeeping will take place in at Hagley Community Centre in Worcester Road, near Stourbridge.

Sessions will start at 7pm. There will be eight two-hour classes before 10 practical sessions.

If students decide to keep bees they will be assigned an experienced beekeeper to help them. To book contact Nick Templar on 07800 856386 or email: admin@hsbka.org

Beth hopes for stardom

Beth Sherburn, of Lower Gornal, who is releasing her first record this month

BETH SHERBURN is hoping 2013 will be a year to sing about.

The 21-year-old, of Lower Gornal, is about to release her first single. She is on her way to stardom after she was heard singing while working behind a perfume counter at Debenhams in Dudley's Merry Hill shopping centre.

Music producer John McLaughlin, who was shopping, was so impressed when he heard her that he asked her to call him about a recording session. Now Beth is releasing a single – Duran Duran's Ordinary World – on January 28.

She said: "It's just so bizarre that this all started in my workplace. It was just a normal day and that's what's so amazing."

£27k charges for fire service call-outs

FIREFIGHTERS have billed West Midland householders nearly £27,000 in seven months for calling them out to non-emergencies.

The service has always been able to charge for non-emergency cases, but it did not begin to enforce charges until last May. The aim was to stop firefighters being called out unnecessarily.

It has emerged that the service has invoiced people a combined £26,839.78 since May.

West Midlands Fire Authority chairman Councillor John Edwards, a former firefighter, said: "It is just common sense. We're firefighters. We're not locksmiths and we're not plumbers.

"The message is don't call the fire service out if they're not the right people for the task.

"If a fit and healthy person is locked out of the house, they should call their landlord to fix the lock, not the fire service."

The service came in for criticism last May, when it said people calling for non-emergencies would face a charge of £412.80 per hour for every appliance or specialist vehicle sent.

Councillor Edwards stressed that the figures underlined the service's message.

He said: "The idea of charging was never to make money, but keeping firefighters free to do their proper jobs."

Firefighters say their biggest priorities are tackling fires, car crashes and other emergencies and providing safety advice.

In the first 10 weeks of the charges being enforced, the service invoiced 17 people for around £10,000 in total.

Delightful visit to the Gruffalo

The Gruffalo's Child, Birmingham Town Hall

JULIA Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's best-selling children's book has been re-imagined for the stage in this delightful production by the Tall Stories theatre company.

Using large parts of the tale's phenomenally successful predecessor The Gruffalo to flesh out the action to 50 minutes, the show has it all for little ones – songs, dance, audience participation, laughs and a scare or two.

The cast of three perform imaginatively to transform the simple set into the 'deep dark wood' and all the characters are given a humourous twist particularly the snake, owl and fox.

It is a super piece of children's theatre which had my three-year-old literally on the edge of his seat.

Runs until January 16.

David Briggs

Centre to host weekly dances

A community centre in Brierley Hill will be hosting a weekly tea dance.

People can enjoy an afternoon of waltz, quickstep, cha cha and rumba.

The sessions will run from 2pm until 4pm every Monday at Nine Locks Community Centre in Hill Street. They will start on January 14 and cost £2 each.

Refreshments will be available in the interval.

Dancing with vampires and a magical blue genie

EARLY 2013 is filled with dance delights for fans of fancy footwork with acclaimed choreographer Matthew Bourne bringing his latest gothic work to Birmingham and the city's own ballet company presenting a UK premiere.

by Leon Burakowski

Strictly Come Dancing champion and Olympic gymnast Louis Smith will lead the line-up of dancing celebs and professionals when Strictly Come Dancing Live comes to Birmingham NIA from Friday to Sunday, January 18 to 20.

The classical dance calendar begins on January 26 at Birmingham Symphony Hall when Deborah Bull comperes an Evening of Music and Dance with Birmingham Royal Ballet.

Beauty

It will include a preview of David Bintley's new ballet Aladdin plus the Royal Ballet Sinfonia performing Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries.

The male dance divas of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo squeeze into satin pointe-shoes to entertain at Birmingham Hippodrome on February 1 and 2.

Matthew Bourne's acclaimed Sadler's Wells production of Sleeping Beauty – with dancing vampires – is at the Hippodrome from Febuary 5 to 9.

More than four years since its world premiere in Japan, Birmingham Royal Ballet director David Bintley brings his ballet Aladdin to the UK and to the company's home theatre, Birmingham Hippodrome, for 12 performances from February 15.

The creator of hit ballets Hobson's Choice, Take Five and Cinderella has created choreography for music composed by Carl Davis. The production promises an incredible blue genie.

The Russian Royal Ballet of Siberia return to Wolverhampton Grand Theatre next month. They will perform The Nutcracker on the afternoon of Sunday, February 17, Coppelia on February 18 evening, and matinee and evening performances of Swan Lake on February 19.

Choreographer Matthew Bourne presents a radical revamp of Sleeping Beauty next month *Photo by Simon Annand*

Bloody tale of a guilty Tsar

Boris Godunov, RSC Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

OUTGOING artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company Michael Boyd bids farewell to Stratford with this gripping, seldom-seen Russian classic which is better known as a famous opera.

Adrian Mitchell's adaptation – his last before his death in 2008 – delivers clarity and pace in Alexander Pushkin's tale of a bloody and guilty tsar and the young pretender to his imperial throne, set in the Russia of 400 years ago.

Lloyd Hutchinson is powerful as a thick-set, Ulster-accented Tsar Boris, whilst Gethin Anthony (from TV's Game Of Thrones) is mercurial as the young monk who leads a rebellion by posing as the true heir, who Boris secretly had murdered years before.

Most impressive of all is Lucy Briggs-Owen as a scheming power-hungry Polish princess.

A stark set, with coat hangers for costumes from various historic eras, is the arena for intensely physical performances.

Director Boyd brings out Pushkin's debt to Shakespeare tragedies and parallels with the modern Russia of President Putin in this two-hour production, fast-paced without an interval.

Boris Godunov continues in repertoire at the Swan until March 30.

Leon Burakowski

What's On!

SATURDAY'S TV 12.01.13

Listings supplied by Press Association

CHOICE

Cynthia Nixon

World Without End
Channel 4, 9pm

In theory, Miranda was the most low-maintenance of the Sex and the City quartet, but it may still come as a bit of a shock to see actress Cynthia Nixon removed from New York and plonked down in medieval England in this epic sequel to The Pillars of the Earth. In theory, the conflict is now over, but that doesn't mean peace has been restored for the people of Kingsbridge. Caris (Charlotte Riley) is working to free her father, who has been accused of being a traitor – although it seems her aunt Petranilla (Nixon) has her own reasons for wanting his release.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** The Good Cook. (R) **12.00** BBC News; Regional News; Weather. **12.15** Football Focus. **1.00** Brazil: Welcoming the World. (R) **1.30** Bargain Hunt. **2.30** Live Darts: BDO World Championships. **4.30** Final Score. **5.15** BBC News; Regional News; Weather. **5.30** Animal Antics.

6.00 **Richard Hammond's Secret Service.** The hidden-camera show features a trend-setting young lad who is fooled into thinking he is the next big thing in modern art and a single man experiences a demanding blind date.

6.45 **Britain's Brightest.** Clare Balding hosts the intelligence-based game show, with six more contestants intent on proving they have the brain power to be crowned Britain's Brightest.

8.00 **The National Lottery: In It to Win It.** Dale Winton presents the quiz in which five contestants pit their wits to scoop a big cash prize.

8.50 **Casualty.** Nick Jordan rushes Yvonne into the ED, but Zoe believes he is refusing to accept the severity of her condition. Robyn discovers Aoife's boyfriend is not as perfect as he seems.

9.40 **Mrs Brown's Boys.** Cathy goes to extreme lengths to impress her boyfriend. (R)

10.10 **BBC News;** Weather.

10.30 **Match of the Day.** Including Everton v Swansea City; National Lottery Update.

11.50 **The Football League Show.** Highlights of today's games.

1.05 Weatherview. **1.10** BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Film: The Hitch-Hiker. (1953) **7.15 Film:** On Dangerous Ground. (1951) **8.35 Film:** Armored Car Robbery. (1950) **9.40** The Sky at Night. (R) **10.00** A History of Britain by Simon Schama. (R) **11.00** Meet the Ancestors. (R) **11.30** Map Man. **12.00** Indian Food Made Easy. (R) **12.30** Talking Pictures. (R) **1.15 Film:** Scott of the Antarctic. (1948) **3.00** Coast. (R) **4.00** Stargazing Live. (R) **5.00** Stargazing Live. (R)

6.00 **Stargazing Live.** Brian Cox and Dara O Briain discuss meteors, comets and asteroids, and Liz Bonnin meets the Nasa team tracking space objects on a collision course with Earth. Last in the series. (R)

7.00 **Flog It!** Paul Martin visits Stoke-on-Trent, where he meets people eager to sell their antiques at auction. (R)

8.00 **Dad's Army.** American troops arrive in Walmington-on-Sea. (R)

8.30 **Fawlty Towers.** Sybil walks out on Basil. (R)

9.00 **QI XL.** Stephen Fry hosts an extended version of the quiz with a difference, with Julia Zemiro, Tim Vine, Rob Brydon and Alan Davies answering questions on the theme of jolly. (R)

9.45 **Film: Oranges and Sunshine.** (2010) Premiere. A social worker discovers thousands of British children have been sent to care homes in Australia and suffered abuse. Fact-based drama, with Emily Watson.

11.25 **Darts: BDO World Championships.** Both men's semi-finals and the women's final.

12.15 Film: Sugarhouse. (2007)

ITV1

6.00 CITV: Handy Manny. **6.05** Handy Manny. **6.25** The Hive. (R) **6.35** The Hive. (R) **6.40** Dino Dan. (R) **6.55** Dino Dan. (R) **7.05** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **7.15** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **7.30** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **7.40** Matt Hatter Chronicles. (R) **8.05** Ultimate Spider-Man. **8.30** Victorious. (R) **9.00** Jessie. **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. **10.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. **11.20** Saturday Cookbook. (R) **12.20** ITV News; Weather. **12.25 Film:** Columbo: Suitable for Framing. (1971) **1.55** My Tasty Travels with Lynda Bellingham. (R) **2.55 Film:** Hulk. (2003) Adventure, starring Eric Bana. **5.30** Regional Programme ; Weather.**5.45** ITV News; Weather.

6.00 **New You've Been Framed: The Next Generation.** A round-up of the best clips featuring children.

7.00 **Splash!** Another five celebrities – Joey Essex, Caprice, Eddie "The Eagle" Edwards, Diarmuid Gavin and Charlotte Jackson – compete for two places in the semi-final of the diving contest.

8.30 **Take Me Out.** A firefighter, a sales assistant, a comic-book collector and a student enter the love lift in the hope of impressing 30 single women. Paddy McGuinness presents.

9.45 **The Jonathan Ross Show.** With Jamie Foxx, Jerry Hall and Micky Flanagan.

10.45 **ITV News**; Weather.

11.00 **Film: Beowulf.** (2007) Motion-capture animated fantasy, starring Ray Winstone.

1.05 The Store. **2.20** In Plain Sight. (R) **3.05** Pushing Daisies. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.05 Sali Mali. (R) **6.10** The Hoobs. (R) **6.35** The Hoobs. (R) **7.00** Beach Volleyball. **8.00** The Morning Line. **9.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **10.00** Frasier. (R) **10.30** Frasier. (R) **11.00** Undercover Boss USA. (R) **12.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **1.00** The Simpsons. (R) **1.30** Channel 4 Racing. **4.00** Come Dine with Me: Ireland. **4.25** Come Dine with Me: Ireland. **5.00** Come Dine with Me: Ireland. **5.30** Come Dine with Me: Ireland.

6.00 **Come Dine with Me: Ireland.** Bulgarian surf instructor Dimitar Dosev hosts the final party in Sligo, preparing an ambitious menu that includes barbecued lobster.

6.30 **Channel 4 News.**

6.55 **4thought.tv.** Public confidence in religious leaders.

7.00 **Film: Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian.** (2009) Nightwatchman Larry and his living museum-exhibit friends must stop a reanimated pharaoh from taking over the world. Fantasy comedy sequel, starring Ben Stiller and Amy Adams.

9.00 **World Without End.** New series. A knight involved in a plot to kill Edward II finds sanctuary in the village of Kingsbridge. Historical drama, starring Cynthia Nixon, Peter Firth and Ben Chaplin.

10.55 **Film: The 51st State.** (2001) Action comedy, starring Samuel L Jackson.

12.45 Film: Pan's Labyrinth. (2006) **2.45** Hollyoaks. **4.50** Smallville. (R) **5.30** Countdown. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.00** Power Rangers: Super Samurai. **10.35** Batman: The Brave and the Bold. **11.10** Inside Hollywood. (R) **11.20** Celebrity Big Brother: Eviction. (R) **12.15** The Gadget Show. (R) **1.20 Film:** Brave Warrior. (1952) **2.50 Film:** Mutiny on the Bounty. (1962)

6.10 **Film: Attack on the Iron Coast.** (1968) Commandos undertake a mission to disable a German navy base – but complications arise. Second World War drama, starring Lloyd Bridges.

7.50 **5 News Weekend.**

7.55 **NCIS.** Gibbs receives a call from his old friend Senator Patrick Kiley, who claims he is being framed for the murder of a naval commander – but the evidence quickly piles up against him. (R)

8.50 **NCIS.** A marine is found tortured to death in his garage. (R)

9.45 **Celebrity Big Brother.** Highlights of the famous housemates' past 24 hours under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, as they try to get used to living alongside one another.

10.45 **50 Shocking Facts About Diet and Exercise.** Countdown of methods adopted to lose weight. (R)

11.45 **Comedy Kings: Best of Just for Laughs.** With Noel Fielding, Flight of the Conchords and Dylan Moran. (R)

12.15 SuperCasino. **3.55** Michaela's Wild Challenge. (R) **4.20** Great Artists. (R) **4.50** Rough Guide To. (R) **5.05** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.15** The Milkshake! Show. (R) **5.40** Thomas & Friends. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three

7.00 Great Movie Mistakes 2: The Sequel **7.10** Merlin **7.55** Doctor Who **8.40** Top Gear **9.40 Film:** Armageddon (1998) A drilling team transports a nuclear device into outer space to destroy an asteroid on a collision course with Earth. Sci-fi thriller, with Bruce Willis, Ben Affleck and Liv Tyler.

BBC Four

7.00 Lost Land of the Tiger **8.00** A History of Art in Three Colours **9.00** Borgen **11.00** Pop Charts Britannia: 60 Years of the Top 10

ITV2

3.30 You've Been Framed! **6.00 Film:** King Kong (2005) **9.45** Take Me Out – The Gossip **10.30** Fake Reaction **11.15 Film:** I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry (2007)

ITV3

2.40 A Touch of Frost **4.55** Agatha Christie's Marple **7.00** Doc Martin **9.00** Midsomer Murders **11.05 Film:** Rain Man (1988)

ITV4

3.40 Film: The Sea Shall Not Have Them (1955) **5.40 Film:** The Last Sunset (1961) **8.00** The Sweeney **9.00 Film:** The Keeper (2009) **11.05 Film:** Child's Play 3 (1991)

E4

3.30 Rules of Engagement **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **7.00** Happy Endings **8.00** How I Met Your Mother **8.30** 2 Broke Girls **9.00 Film:** Snakes on a Plane (2006) **11.05** The Big Bang Theory

Film4

3.05 Carry On Spying (1964) **4.50** Anastasia (1997) **6.40** A Good Year (2006) Comedy drama, starring Russell Crowe. **9.00** Double Jeopardy (1999) Thriller, starring Ashley Judd. **11.05** Silent Hill (2006) Horror, starring Radha Mitchell and Sean Bean.

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SUNDAY'S TV 13.01.13

Listings supplied by Press Association

CHOICE

Timothy Spall

Blandings
BBC1, 6.30pm
Period costumes, an all-star cast and PG Wodehouse – with the possible exception of pensioners going down hill in tin baths, what more could you ask for in a new BBC Sunday evening comedy series? If you're unfamiliar with the Blandings stories, they centre around the perpetually befuddled Lord Emsworth (Timothy Spall), known to his friends as Clarence, who longs for a quiet life dedicated to his beloved pig The Empress. However, when he's surrounded by a dysfunctional family, peace is rather hard to come by.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.40** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Sunday Politics; Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.25** Countryfile. (R) **1.25** Bargain Hunt. **2.25** Escape to the Country. (R) **3.25** Chatsworth. (R) **4.25** Songs of Praise. **5.00** Africa. (R)

6.00 **BBC News;** Regional News; Weather.

6.30 **Blandings.** New series. Period comedy, starring Timothy Spall.

7.00 **Countryfile.** Hertfordshire is the destination for this week's show, as Julia Bradbury learns about a shrimp habitat and Matt Baker meets the dogs playing for the county's finest flyball teams.

8.00 **Antiques Roadshow.** Items under scrutiny at Cawdor Castle near Inverness include the best bargain-buy dolls ever seen on the show and an 18th-century travelling chest with royal connections. Red button viewers can play along by guessing the valuations.

9.00 **Ripper Street.** A sudden cholera outbreak causes Reid and the team to suspect deliberate contamination, so they scour Whitechapel for clues and connections as the laboratory fills with bodies.

10.00 **BBC News;** Regional News; Weather.

10.25 **Match of the Day 2.** Including Manchester United v Liverpool.

11.25 **Room 101 – Extra Storage.** With Terry Wogan, Phil Tufnell and Victoria Coren.

12.05 The Celebrity Apprentice USA. **1.30** Weatherview. **1.35** BBC News.

BBC2

6.05 **Film:** I Remember Mama. (1948) **8.15** Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein. (R) **8.45** A to Z of TV Gardening. **9.30** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.00** EastEnders. (R) **12.55** Live Snooker: The Masters. **5.00** Ski Sunday. **5.45** Live Darts: BDO World Championships.

8.00 **The Battle for Malta.** Historian James Holland analyses the Second World War battle for the strategically important Mediterranean island, which was under siege by Axis forces for more than two years. (R)

9.00 **Tankies: Tank Heroes of WWII.** Mark Urban concludes his examination of the exploits of six members of the 5th Royal Tank Regiment, telling their story from D-Day to the end of the war.

10.00 **Speed Dreams: The Fastest Place on Earth.** After all the preparations back in the UK, the men finally test their custom-built machines in a week of racing on Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats. Bill Nighy narrates.

11.00 **Snooker: The Masters.** Mark Allen v Mark Davis. Action from this evening's first-round tie at Alexandra Palace, where Davis was looking to build on his impressive showing at last month's UK Championship.

11.50 **Snooker Extra.** Neil Robertson v Ding Junhui. Hazel Irvine presents extended highlights of the opening first-round match of the Masters at Alexandra Palace.

1.50 Sign Zone: Holby City. (R) **2.50** Who Do You Think You Are? (R)

ITV1

6.00 CITV: Handy Manny. **6.05** Handy Manny. **6.25** The Hive. (R) **6.35** The Hive. (R) **6.40** Dino Dan. (R) **6.55** Dino Dan. **7.05** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **7.15** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **7.30** Almost Naked Animals. **7.40** Matt Hatter Chronicles. (R) **8.05** Rated A for Awesome. **8.15** Rated A for Awesome. **8.30** Big Time Rush. **9.00** The Aquabats Super Show. **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** There's No Taste Like Home. (R) **10.25** Dinner Date. (R) **11.25** May the Best House Win. (R) **12.25** Dickinson's Real Deal. (R) **1.25** Rosemary & Thyme. (R) **2.25** ITV News; Weather. **2.30** **Film:** Sparkling Cyanide. (1983) **4.30** All Star Family Fortunes. (R) **5.15** You've Been Framed! (R) **5.45** Regional Programme; Weather.

6.00 **ITV News;** Weather.

6.15 **Dancing on Ice.** The celebrities who did not perform last week take their chance to impress the public and the judges.

7.45 **All Star Family Fortunes.** With choreographer Louie Spence and radio presenter Richard Bacon.

8.30 **Dancing on Ice: The Skate Off.** The two lowest-scoring couples compete.

9.00 **Mr Selfridge.** Following a slow opening, Harry tries to draw in the crowds by arranging to exhibit the plane of pioneering aviator Louis Bleriot inside the store. Drama, with Jeremy Piven.

10.00 **ITV News at Ten;** Weather.

10.15 **Film: The Constant Gardener.** (2005) Political thriller, with Ralph Fiennes and Rachel Weisz.

12.30 The Store. **2.30** Monk. (R) **3.20** Pushing Daisies. (R) **4.05** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.15 The Hoobs. (R) **6.40** The Hoobs. (R) **7.05** Will & Grace. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.25** Frasier. (R) **8.55** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.05** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.40** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **1.10** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **1.40** The Simpsons. (R) **2.10** The Simpsons. (R) **2.40** **Film:** Honey, I Blew Up the Kid. (1992) **4.25** Deal or No Deal. **5.25** Time Team.

6.25 **Channel 4 News.**

6.55 **4thought.tv.** Public confidence in religious leaders.

7.00 **Come Dine with Me.** Beautician Amanda Bradley, author and businessman Heath Samples, accident-prone Fran Atkin and technician Phil Laycock from North Yorkshire take up the dinner party challenge.

8.00 **The Hotel.** Manager Mark continues to try to attract more upmarket guests to the Grosvenor and makes plans to launch a new five-star breakfast, with a gourmet sausage as the main attraction.

9.00 **Film: Unknown.** (2011) Premiere. A doctor wakes from a coma to find another man is claiming to be him, and any evidence of his real identity has disappeared. Thriller, with Liam Neeson and Diane Kruger.

11.15 **Film: Beverly Hills Cop.** (1984) Comedy thriller, starring Eddie Murphy, Judge Reinhold, Ronny Cox and Steven Berkoff.

1.15 **Film:** Four Brothers. (2005) **3.05** Smallville. (R) **3.45** St Elsewhere. (R) **4.30** Deal or No Deal. (R) **5.25** Countdown. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **6.15** Fifi and the Flowertots. (R) **6.25** Bert and Ernie's Great Adventures. (R) **6.30** The Mr Men Show. (R) **6.45** Olive the Ostrich. (R) **6.50** Abby's Flying Fairy School. (R) **7.00** Roobarb and Custard Too. (R) **7.10** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **7.20** Animal Antics. (R) **7.30** Make Way for Noddy. (R) **7.40** City of Friends. (R) **7.55** Little Princess. (R) **8.05** Mio Mao. (R) **8.10** The Adventures of Bottle Top Bill and His Best Friend Corky. (R) **8.25** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **8.40** Castle Farm. (R) **8.45** Rupert Bear. (R) **9.00** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.15** Toby's Travelling Circus. (R) **9.30** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **9.45** Jelly Jamm. **10.00** Power Rangers: Super Samurai. **10.35** Batman: The Brave and the Bold. **11.10** Meerkat Manor. (R) **11.40** Celebrity Big Brother. (R) **12.40** Once Upon a Time. (R) **1.40** **Film:** Little Man. (2006) **3.25** **Film:** Mannequin. (1987) **5.10** **Film:** Loch Ness. (1996)

6.55 **5 News Weekend.**

7.00 **Film: Bulletproof Monk.** (2003) A mysterious Tibetan monk battles modern-day Nazis while training a thief to be his replacement. Thriller, starring Chow Yun-Fat.

9.00 **Celebrity Big Brother.** The ups and downs of BB life.

10.00 **Film: Over Her Dead Body.** (2008) Premiere. Romantic comedy, starring Eva Longoria and Paul Rudd.

11.55 **Bizarre Burials.** Unusual and memorable ways in which deaths are marked. (R)

12.55 SuperCasino. **3.55** House Doctor. (R) **4.20** HouseBusters. (R) **4.45** Rough Guide To. (R) **5.00** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.15** The Milkshake! Show. (R) **5.35** Thomas & Friends. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Growing Up Poor **8.00** **Film:** Up (2009) **9.30** World's Craziest Fools **10.00** Sun, Sex and Suspicious Parents **11.00** Family Guy **11.45** American Dad!

BBC Four
7.00 The Sky at Night **8.00** The Sky at Night Special: Exploring Mars **8.30** Sir Patrick Moore: Astronomer, Broadcaster and Eccentric **9.00** Sir Patrick Moore Talks to Mark Lawson **10.00** **Film:** Leaving (2009) **11.20** Dame Shirley Bassey at the BBC

ITV2
3.15 **Film:** Mr Bean's Holiday (2007) **5.00** Take Me Out **6.15** Take Me Out – The Gossip **7.00** **Film:** Uncle Buck (1989) **9.00** The Magaluf Weekender **10.00** **Film:** 2 Fast 2 Furious (2003)

ITV3
3.40 Lewis **5.40** Murder, She Wrote **6.45** Agatha Christie's Poirot **9.00** The Best of the Royal Variety **10.00** Lewis

ITV4
3.40 **Film:** The Appaloosa (1966) **5.45** **Film:** The Secret War of Harry Frigg (1967) **8.00** Minder **9.00** **Film:** The Jerk (1979) Comedy, with Steve Martin. **11.00** **Film:** Sweeney! (1977)

E4
3.45 Revenge **4.45** **Film:** Cheaper By the Dozen 2 (2005) **6.40** **Film:** The Day After Tomorrow (2004) **9.05** The Big Bang Theory **10.00** The New Normal **10.30** 2 Broke Girls **11.00** Rude Tube: Welcome to 2013

Film4
2.50 Only You (1994) **5.00** Robots (2005) **6.45** The Women (2008) **9.00** The Ugly Truth (2009) Romantic comedy, starring Gerard Butler and Katherine Heigl. **10.55** Carlos – Part One (2010)

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What's On!

Film Choices

MONDAY
Jane Doe: The Wrong Face, Channel 5, 3.15pm
The former government agent is called back into action after kidnappers abduct a district attorney's wife during plastic surgery – meaning nobody knows what the victim now looks like. The criminals demand the release of the defendant in a money-laundering trial, but the accused denies all knowledge of the crime. Thriller, starring Lea Thompson, Joe Penny and Jessy Schram. (2005)

TUESDAY
Flightplan, BBC1, 11.05pm
A widow boards a plane with her daughter and promptly falls asleep. When she wakes up, the girl has disappeared – and the mother's fear turns to outright panic when the aircraft crew insists she boarded the flight alone, suggesting the child is merely a figment of her distressed imagination. Thriller, starring Jodie Foster, Peter Sarsgaard, Sean Bean and Greta Scacchi. (2005)

Tropic Thunder, Friday, BBC1, 11.20pm

WEDNESDAY
When a Man Loves a Woman, BBC1, 11.40pm
A couple's outwardly idyllic marriage is close to disintegrating through the wife's alcoholism, prompting her husband to resort to desperate measures to make her give up drinking for their children's sake. However, he is also forced to face up to the part he played in allowing her life to go off the rails. Drama, with Andy Garcia, Meg Ryan, Lauren Tom, Ellen Burstyn, Tina Majorino and Mae Whitman. (1994)

THURSDAY
Lover Come Back, Channel 4, 12.35pm
Advertising executive Carol Templeton is determined to best her competitor Jerry Webster at every opportunity. When an important campaign comes up, she sets out to beat him to it and clinch the deal at any price. Unfortunately for her, she fails to realise the whole thing is a set-up devised by her hated rival. Romantic comedy, starring Doris Day, Rock Hudson, Tony Randall, Edie Adams and Jack Oakie. (1961)

FRIDAY
Tropic Thunder, BBC1, 11.20pm
A director's epic Vietnam picture is behind schedule and over budget. Taking the advice of the grizzled war veteran on whose life the film is based, he drops the actors into a jungle with the intention of filming them fighting guerrilla-style – but the cast is unaware the surrounding warfare is genuine. Comedy, directed by and starring Ben Stiller, with Jack Black, Steve Coogan and, in an Oscar-nominated role, Robert Downey Jr. (2008)

Pick of the Week

Caught in a net of lies, intrigue and danger

Alexandra Roach may only be a mere 25 years old, but try telling her impressive CV that – it clearly knows no bounds as she picks winning script after winning script.

She first came to prominence in last year's The Iron Lady as a young Margaret Thatcher, but as her star continues on in its ascent, the actress appears here in Dennis Kelly's fantastic thriller.

However, she's not the only talent to be found, what with the cast list reading like a who's-who of recognisable UK talent.

Roach plays Becky, one of a group of five people who have bonded through an online forum and agree to meet after gaining possession of the original manuscript for fabled graphic novel The Utopia Experiments. But they're not the only ones who are in the know about the manuscript; a shadowy organization known as The Network is hot on their trail and will go to any lengths to get hold of it, and it's not long before one of the forum members is killed.

The murder is witnessed by fellow member 11-year-old Grant (Oliver Woollford), who quickly flees with the manuscript, while Becky and Ian (Nathan Stewart-Jarrett) realise they've been set up for crimes they didn't commit, and the final member Wilson (Adeel Akhtar) attracts the attention of Network henchmen Arby (Neil Maskill) and Lee (Paul Ready).

This is a group of people who now have a lot more on their plate than a bit of light reading…

If it sounds complicated, that's probably because it is, but that won't stop this thriller assuring that Channel 4 has a fantastic start to 2013.

But, as one of the stars of the show, what does Ms Roach thinks makes it so gripping?

"Dennis Kelly's writing [is] brilliant," she explains. "I also think he writes for women so well. All the female characters in this are very strong and feisty and full of personality. As soon as I read Becky, I could see her in my brain, and I could see how she was going to say her lines. I got really excited, which is really scary as an actor, because you haven't been offered the part.

"I cancelled a holiday and everything just because I wanted this so much. I was so thrilled when I actually got it."

And of the programme's brutality, she explains: "I found it exhausting to film, because being on the run from halfway through episode one onwards was a lot. We were filming in Liverpool for four months, and every day was really full.

"The stakes are always really high for the group, there are no scenes where you can really relax and take a back seat. It takes a lot out of you, filming for four months like that. You've got to have so much energy; you can't go on the back foot."

So that's our January sorted then, and thank goodness it doesn't require anything more from us than curling up on the sofa and indulging in some top-notch viewing.

Alexandra Roach heads the cast of Utopia, Tuesday, Channel 4, 10pm

Best of the Rest

MONDAY
Winterwatch 2013
BBC2, 8.30pm
Everyone's favourite naturalists Chris Packham, Michaela Strachan and Martin Hughes-Games are back in the Highlands of Scotland for this new series charting the changing of the seasons. It's been a decidedly soggy winter so far this year, and it follows one of the wettest years on record – so it will be interesting to see how the nation's fauna and flora are coping with the sustained deluge. The trio are presenting from their base at the Aigas Field Centre, but they hear from reports around the country, as they follow the fortunes of beavers, red squirrels, pine martens and a host of other animals to see how they fare with the various challenges this season has to offer.

Mrs Brown's Boys
BBC1, 9.30pm
We could describe this sitcom as a Marmite of televisual comedy – viewers either love or hate it. The same could be said of Miranda; oddly, the great viewing figures both shows received on New Year's Day helped BBC1 win the bank holiday ratings battle against ITV1. Whether the series can maintain that momentum is anybody's guess, but seeing as the laughs come thick and fast in each episode, there's no reason why it shouldn't. This week, Agnes is in a great mood because she's celebrating her anniversary – the only way things could be better is if Dr Flynn organised some respite care for Grandad so she could go away on holiday for a couple of weeks. Luckily, she has a cunning plan up her sleeve.

TUESDAY
The Sarah Millican Television Programme
BBC2, 10pm
South Shields comic Sarah Millican has had quite the whirlwind career, from winning the if.comedy Award in Edinburgh for Best Newcomer in 2008 to releasing a record-breaking DVD in 2011. She's now earned her place very much in the mainstream of modern comedy, and her observational style lends itself perfectly to this series, which focuses on her opinions on the current crop of small-screen offerings. The first series proved hilarious viewing, so we're glad she's back to guide us through the latest batch of shows that this new season brings. She's joined on the first show by Strictly Come Dancing judge Craig Revel Horwood and former Spice Girl Melanie C, and intersperses her interviews with stand-up monologues that pull no punches.

WEDNESDAY
Gok's Style Secrets
Channel 4, 8pm
Mr Wan rushes to the aid of 53-year-old mother Naseem, who is not only single, but almost two decades-single! Since splitting with the father of her son, the former aerobics teacher from Essex has thrown all her energy into raising now 19-year-old Casey, unfortunately letting her style and confidence slip at the same time. It's the perfect time for a complete overhaul though, as Casey's preparing to fly the nest, so Gok is on hand with some top-notch flirting and fashion tips. And there are no excuses now Naseem, after all, you live in the glitz capital of the UK (although we hope you will stop short of a vajazzle!).

Funny Business
BBC2, 9pm
We all know comedy can be a lucrative business, and many comics generate pots of cash via the corporate world, whether it's making after-dinner speeches or appearing in TV commercials. This documentary narrated by Eddie Mair reveals more about this money-spinning world and reveals what happened when a British stand-up decided to set up a company trading on laughs. While some comics might be just in it for the money, others such as Rhod Gilbert ended up making a fortune by accident: "Making people laugh is something I've always loved doing, but doing it for a living or doing it on a stage in some kind of formal environment was never part of my plan," he explains. Among the other contributors are Barry Cryer, John Cleese, Jo Brand, Arthur Smith and Clive Anderson.

American Idol, Friday, Channel 5, 10pm

THURSDAY
Inside Death Row with Trevor McDonald
ITV1, 9pm
At first glance, it looks as if poor old Sir Trev has got himself in an awful lot of trouble and is currently languishing in a US jail somewhere. But don't worry, dear readers – he's safe and sound and is merely fronting this two-part documentary in which he meets the 12 prisoners who are currently on death row at Indiana State Maximum Security Prison. The institution itself isn't a pleasant place to be (as you would expect), but to be there and know you will die without ever being free again – and knowing exactly when you will be killed – is an almost unimaginable situation. Expect some incredible stories from the dozen on death row, as well as those serving life sentences for various violent crimes.

FRIDAY
American Idol
Channel 5, 10pm
Talent shows, as we all know, are no guarantee of success. One of the biggest tragedies of this show is that David Cook, winner of the 2008 American Idol contest, never made a ripple on this side of the Pond, despite releasing a couple of the best albums of recent years. Niggles aside, there are still plenty of goodies to enjoy with this new run of the enduring 'search for a music star' show, including a new judging line-up that sees Mariah Carey, Nicki Minaj and Keith Urban joining old-hand Randy Jackson. The series starts on Thursday, January 17 on 5* with a two-hour special, then Channel 5 join 5* for this second audition show.

Brain Gym

No.203

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.

22 A	12	23	25	■	21	2	18	1	5	15	14	22
18 M	■	1	■	■	17	■	■	24	■	14	■	3
3	■	1	11	5	15	6	13	2	■	23	■	15
5	1	3	■	■	■	13	■	■	19	22	20	2
25	■	5	■	22	26	22	19	■	■	5	■	12
■	16	22	5	5	■	5	■	21	15	2	9	2
■	■	■	■	18	■	15	■	5	■	■	■	■
12	23	22	3	21	■	4	■	22	3	21	2	■
22	■	20	■	■	5	15	4	16	■	5	■	7
12	5	22	24	■	■	2	■	■	■	2	9	2
16	■	5	■	7	1	10	5	15	17	2	■	14
13	■	2	■	2	■	■	22	■	■	9	■	13
21	18	22	5	5	3	1	8	■	18	2	24	21

1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18 M
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22 A
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1 A	2 Y	3 X	4 M	5 J	6 N	7 D	8 R	9 Q	10 B	11 V	12 L	13 P
14 F	15 O	16 I	17 E	18 S	19 G	20 K	21 Z	22 U	23 C	24 T	25 W	26 H

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SEARCH: DAILY EXPRESS PUZZLES

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Despondent - because the liquor stocks have disappeared? (3,2,7)
7. The cleric is one of the big guns, we hear (5)
8. Part of the poem is hypocrisy and nothing more (5)
9. Shoot, pal (3)
10. Men spoilt in reforming this half-wit (9)
11. Cow-catcher? (6)
12. Sound quality of a doctor who takes part in unusual rite (6)
15. Giving an account of how the sailor ran back first (9)
17. A section of arable acreage (3)
18. In practice, this is played (5)
19. To signify I'm to make regular journeys (5)
21. Fresh declarations giving causes about changing rites (12)

Down

1. Tips on top of the scales (12)
2. This will cool an enthusiast (3)
3. Country shown by an inclusion in a map redrawn (6)
4. Not forgetting about a vocation (9)
5. Canvas erection round the East should be strongly held (5)
6. Approves of what people are faced with! (12)
7. Seen in a well-placed arboretum! (5)
10. They are bound to use craft in making progress (9)
13. Can intended for William (5)
14. It is in splendid surroundings, but subject to limitations (6)
16. Instigate quarrels, we hear (5)
20. One way to congratulate an Irishman (3)

Quick Clues:

Across

1. Spineless (12)
7. Power (5)
8. To doubt (5)
9. Mine (3)
10. Designer of buildings (9)
11. Deny (6)
12. Strain (6)
15. Serviceable (9)
17. Bother (3)
18. Porcelain (5)
19. Guide (5)
21. Clearly (12)

Down

1. Greenness (12)
2. Equip (3)
3. Tempt (6)
4. Necessary (9)
5. In that place (5)
6. Incomprehensibly (12)
7. Subject (5)
10. Link (9)
13. Characteristic (5)
14. Banish (6)
16. Pretend (5)
20. Loiter (3)

1				2		3		4		5		■
	■	■	■		■		■		■		■	6
	■	7					■	8				
	■		■	■	■		■		■		■	
9				10								
	■				■		■		■	■	■	
11						■	12			13		
	■	■	■		■	14	■		■		■	
15		16								17		
	■		■		■		■	■	■		■	
18					■	19		20			■	
	■		■		■		■		■	■	■	
■	21				■						■	

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 4 Address; 8 Aboard; 9 Ascribe; 10 Tirade; 11 Retail; 12 Reserved; 18 Cardinal; 20 Jacket; 21 Inlets; 22 Stature; 23 Lesson; 24 Archway. Down: 1 Casters; 2 Poorest; 3 Trader; 5 Disorder; 6 Rarity; 7 Submit; 13 Victoria; 14 Incense; 15 Closing; 16 Batter; 17 Sketch; 19 Dinner. QUICK - Across: 4 Languor; 8 Meagre; 9 Qualify; 10 Little; 11Assent; 12 Turncoat; 18 Irritate; 20 Famous; 21 Afraid; 22 Disdain; 23 Prison; 24 Bearing. Down: 1 Emulate; 2 Mastery; 3 Frolic; 5 Adulator; 6 Galosh; 7 Offend; 13 Omission; 14 Malaise; 15 Leading; 16 Malice; 17 Wonder; 19 Inform.

Sudoku

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

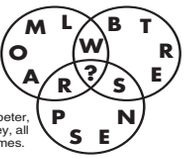
8	1	4			5	9		
				7				1
		3			8		6	
1		6			4		9	2
			7		2			
4	3		9			5		8
	6		5			1	2	
				1				
		1	4			7	5	3

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

8	2	6	4	5	3	1	7	9
1	5	9	8	7	6	2	4	3
3	7	4	9	2	1	8	6	5
2	9	1	7	6	8	3	5	4
7	4	5	2	3	9	6	8	1
6	8	3	5	1	4	7	9	2
5	1	7	6	9	2	4	3	8
4	6	2	3	8	5	9	1	7
9	3	8	1	4	7	5	2	6

Circlegram

Replace the question mark with a letter so that the letters within each circle can be arranged to form words on a common theme. What are the three words, and the letter represented by the question mark?



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION: The letter represented by the question mark is L. Lampeter, Llanelli, Anglesey, all Welsh place names.

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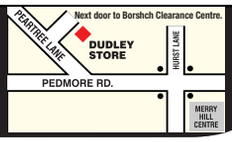

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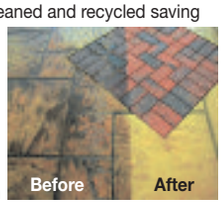

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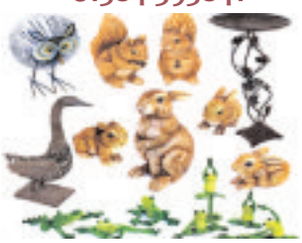

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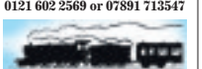

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Ford B-Max aims to beat invaders

IT'S never been harder for companies like Ford to sell cars aimed squarely at the middle of the market.

By Ian Donaldson

These days that's a tricky place to be, as buyers pour into dearer or cheaper cars (say, Audi or Skoda) and Far Eastern poachers like Kia and Hyundai nibble at Ford, Peugeot, Fiat and the like.

These long-term Europeans can't lower prices (they're sitting on heroic losses already) and face the fight of their lives.

With a car like the new B-Max, Ford has clearly decided to fight back by being cleverer than the competition.

It's a tricky path: the history of motoring is littered with wrecks that were too clever by half.

But it takes no more than opening the doors of the newcomer to realise Ford has got this one right. Take it for a drive, with the newest engine on board, and you'll start to worry for the opposition.

The B-Max shares some of its hidden bits with the Fiesta, but you'd never know. At a stroke it solves a problem that's bugged cars used by growing families and older people – getting in an out easily. Ford's answer is to do away with the body pillar that separates front and rear doors, leaving a huge unobstructed opening that makes clipping toddlers into their car seats a doddle.

Gran and grandma will find it's never been so easy to slide into the back seat, helped by the B-Max's relatively tall build.

Nagging

Sliding rear doors complete the easy-entry magic and a top five star rating in the European crash tests dispel any nagging fears that the missing side pillar might raise. The pillar's still there, but built into the moving rear doors. Very clever.

The B-Max range starts at £12,995 for the Studio model, expected to take only a tiny portion of sales. It comes with a modestly powerful petrol engine and lacks air conditioning as standard (it's £700 extra). It does have a DAB radio and electric windows front and rear, though.

Next up is the Zetec series, complete with air con, alloy wheels and heated windscreen.

Prices start at £15,600 but you'll need to pay a bit more (£16,195) for the star of the show. More on that in a moment.

Zetecs will likely account for the majority of B-Max sales, with the posher Titanium trim level (from £17,595) hoovering up the substantial left overs and including niceties like cruise control, smarter air and heated front seats as part of the package.

But back to the star. It's a B-Max powered by Ford's new superflyweight three-cylinder petrol engine. It's tiny, but a turbocharger helps the modest one litre unit perform like a champ from several weight divisions above.

It's a remarkable piece of engineering, sounding wonderfully potent when pushed and delivering mid-range overtaking performance you have to experience to appreciate. The near certainty of at least 40mpg helps too. There's a more powerful (122bhp against 99bhp) of the engine in the B-Max range but only available in Titanium trim for £18,195.

Clever sliding side doors make access easy for young and especially the old

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11 61	**CORSA SE 1.416V** 5DR BLACK SAPPHIRE 9,000 MILES	£9295	£8995	£300
11 61	**CORSA SE 1.416V** 5DR BLACK SAPPHIRE 10,500 MILES	£9295	£8895	£400
11 61	**CORSA SE 1.416V** 5DR SOVEREIGN SILVER 7,000 MILES PARK ASSIST & BLUETOOTH	£9695	£9195	£500
11 61	**CORSA Sri 1.416V** 5DR TECHNICAL GREY 9,500 MILES	£9695	SOLD	£700
12 61	**CORSA SE 1.416V** 5DR SILVER LAKE 12,000 MILES	£9495	£8995	£500
12 61	**CORSA SE 1.416V** 5DR TECHNICAL GREY 13,500 MILES	£9495	£8995	£500
12 12	**CORSA SE 1.216V** 5DR SILVER LAKE 8,500 MILES	£9995	£9595	£400
09 59	**ASTRA DESIGN 1.616V** 5DR PANACOTTA SILVER 39,000 MILES	£7195	£6695	£500
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10 10	**MERIVA DESIGH 1.616V** 5DR STAR SILVER 45,000 MILES	£6995	£6495	£500
11 11	**INSIGNIA Sri 2.0CDTi** 160ps 5DR BLACK SAPPHIRE 17,500 MILES	£12995	£11995	£1000
11 11	**INSIGNIA SE 1.816V** 5DR CARBON FLASH 36,000 MILES	£10195	£9695	£500
12 12	**INSIGNIA Sri NAV 2.0CDTi 160ps** 5DR TECHNICAL GREY 12,500 MILES	£15995	£14995	£1000
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11 61	**FORD TRANSIT 85 T260M 2.2TDCi** WHITE 18,000 MILES	£9995	£9495	£500
12 12	**VW CADDY PLUS 1.6TDi** 102 WHITE 13,000 MILES	£10995	£10495	£500

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KIRSTY separated businesswoman with GSOH and solvent/good lifestyle looking for long term romance, lets meet and find out more about each other.

To view these members and others go to: http://dating.expressandstar.com

Kirsty & Ryan

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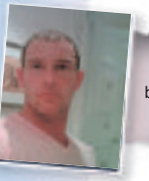

RYAN, 5ft 7ins, 37, medium build, brown hair, green eyes, honest, caring, seeks female for lasting relationship.

Guys Text n' Chat. Text in now and chat to local people. Send : CHAT207 To : 65125. Or call 0906 635 0510.

(T&C's below)

SINGLE LADIES

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.53 per minute plus network extras. Texts cost £1.50 per message sent.

CAROLINE attractive, kind, caring, 43, seeking kind, caring male for LTR, 45-50. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396837**

NATASHA single professional 39yr old brunette looking for fun and friendship with genuine guy, 30-50yrs. Status unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 395719**

TRISH tall slim young/good looking GSOH, professional, solvent, OHAC, affectionate and loves tlc, WLTM male who also likes to be in a loving relationship, 39-50yrs. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397579**

CARING lady, 52, brown hair/eyes, seeks male, 30-60 for socialising, meals out, cinema, music, sports and having a laugh. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 392883**

LOVING caring young 68yr old female, 5ft 2ins, slim-medium build, size 12, smoker, seeks slim, well dressed guy with GSOH for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399923**

ANGELA green eyed dark haired feminine lady who enjoys walking and keeping fit, seeking lonely kind gentleman for good times and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399633**

LISA attractive blue eyed brunette, sporty, well maintained 25yr old uni student looking for older male for discreet dates. Status unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399619**

GRACE Jones lookalike, black lady, 53, 5ft 11ins, OHAC, WLTM male, 45-65, 6ft plus for relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397681**

TRACY 26, pretty petite brunette, possibly looking for LTR but definitely looking for fun times with outgoing guy. Any age/looks. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397027**

CLARE 38, single mum, curvy hour glass, loves to be tactile, OHAC, WLTM caring male for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399047**

PAULA 37, WLTM male companion for meals out, social drinking, weekends away, hopefully leading to a meaningful friendship with benefits! Any age. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398503**

MICHELLE 39yr old nurse, slim, petite, blonde, blue eyes, looking to enjoy life with similar romantic, caring guy. Single dad welcome. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398349**

DEBS lonely 40's female with no ties, GSOH, N/S, loves the simple things in life looking for similar soul mate to be happy together with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399523**

HI I'm Sharon an outgoing single mum looking to find love so thought I would give this a go, please don't make me regret it, someone call me pls. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399197**

HI I'm Marilyn a blue eyed beauty. Call me if you have a happy outlook and are seeking some fun. Age/looks unimportant. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 395665**

SUE confident professional, sporty/active, seeking sensitive interesting guy for intimate evenings in with great food and conversations. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397485**

MARIA French female looking for mutually convenient companionship, very friendly, very discreet and very interested in meeting with you! **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397451**

LUCY beautiful big bottomed black female, very tactile, seeks mature honest white male for loving fun times. Call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397389**

KATHERINE 38, attractive, single, very lonely and looking for love, fun and male companionship. Pls get in touch. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397123**

CARLA 41, brown hair/eyes, 5ft 2ins, loving, seeking male who likes walks, cinema and romantic meals. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396127**

SHARON slim blonde blue eyed outgoing 30's female looking for uncomplicated meets and adult companionship, like what you hear? Call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400119**

I'M Heather I love to cook, eat in/out, share a nice flirty glass of large wine or two with good company and am eager to hear from you. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399715**

NICKY lonely 39yr old single mum looking for adult companionship and strictly no strings fun. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399189**

DEBBIE sexy size 14, fun, outgoing, discreet, looking for fun times only with male over 40yrs, call to find out more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398759**

HI I'm Natalie 24, pretty, friendly, single, seeking energetic man for romantic walks, cosy nights in and fun-loving relationship. Any age/looks/race. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397489**

TINA young attractive 27yr old single female looking for older friendly loving male for adult fun and good times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397563**

BEV 30yr old curvy attractive female, likes music, travel, animals, cosy nights in front of a log fire, looking for affectionate male for good times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397535**

MICHELLE attractive 30's female, blonde, leggy and very much single, seeking quality company, hopefully more with nice romantic male. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 395717**

BUBBLY female, 42, young at heart, honest, caring, likes outdoors, cinema, theatre, meals out, seeks likeminded male/soul mate, 40-50. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 357919**

VICKY honest caring female 33yrs, GSOH, loves meals in/out, travel, cinema, WLTM someone to enjoy nice things in life with and romance. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 383911**

DENISE tall leggy good looking single mum, easygoing, enjoys nights in/out, animals, WLTM tall male for fun times possibly more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 391873**

PICK AN ADVERT AND MAKE A DATE TODAY!

CAROLINE 42yrs, slim attractive blonde. Varied interests and solvent. WLTM honest male of any age. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 395675**

LOUISE 43, 5ft 5ins, medium build, GSOH, kind, caring, honest, genuine, loving, WLTM male, 43-55 with similar qualities for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 376165**

SARAH 23, attractive, brunette, slim, looking for male for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 392979**

KAREN witty female who loves to laugh, WLTM similar male to share interests, romance, cosy nights in and more. Pls call. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393125**

WIDOW 70, genuine, kind, caring, laidback, seeking male for friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 387013**

MANDY 36, size 10, looking for relationship with open-minded man. Status unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 360317**

ALICIA 19yr old green eyed female, very attractive, slim, long hair, independent, looking for fun with mature male, no time wasters. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 390059**

JENNY blue eyed cuddly independent female, loves countryside, animals, cooking, WLTM older male to spoil and look after. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 378481**

MAUREEN seeks male 32-45 for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 323543**

FUN loving lady, outgoing, honest, caring, likes socialising, seeks older male, 50-70. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 383325**

SHAPELY attractive, light skinned black female, 39, seeks attractive, fit, male, 30's, builder type, tanned, rugged for relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 231152**

I'M Julie 36yrs old, attractive, fit, blonde, solvent with OHAC seeking man to spoil and enjoy good times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 395051**

EASYGOING down to earth female, likes cooking, exploring new things in life, seeks male. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 386893**

LADY young 60, outgoing, friendly, smart, likes cinema, shopping, meals out, seeks similar female friends for days out and evenings. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 387117**

PAULINE attractive petite nurse, loves evenings in/out, looking for honest male to share loving friendship and good times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 379535**

BLONDE attractive educated lady 50, young minded, seeks professional tall male, 45-55 for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 391818**

CATHY is a slim attractive lady with an open-minded attitude to life, she WLTM a man of any age. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 395657**

CLARE good looking, beautiful blonde, seeks male for fun and friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 378209**

JANICE 40, 5ft 5ins, medium build, brown eyes, likes music, cooking, cosy nights in/out, seeks similar male for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397407**

BIG bubbly black female, single mum, looking for male for nights in and out. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 392501**

SUSIE gorgeously feminine and sensual, loves lazy summer days, misses male companionship WLTM someone with sense of adventure and lust for life. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 394117**

61YR old lady 5ft 2ins, medium build, long dark hair, smoker, seeks smart gent who wants to get out and about for good times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396409**

LOUISE youthful looking female looking for spontaneous male to put some love and lust back into life. Call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 392491**

HOME alone with no one to call my own! 38yr old girl looking for fun. Can travel. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 363277**

JOY 36 petite medium build, blue eyes, loves romantic walks, meals in/out, WLTM male 30-45 for meets. Status unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 386629**

CHRIS attractive slim sophisticated redhead, seeking male 30-50's to relax with and get to know. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 392401**

LOUISE 35, loves meals out, wltm tallish, considerate mature male who is not frightened to express themselves and enjoy life. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 395727**

FEMALE kind, giving, thoughtful, sensitive, seeks lifetime friend to love and understand me for who I am. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 350397**

LADY widow, 58, slim, brown hair, blue eyes, seeks smart, intelligent, easygoing man with GSOH who enjoys conversations, days out, short breaks, meals out. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 387247**

SINGLE MEN

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.53 per minute plus network extras. Texts cost £1.50 per message sent.

Ladies Text n' Chat. Text in now and chat to local people. Send : CHAT207 To : 65125. (T&C's below).

STEVE single dad, slim, 45, looking for girl who wants fun times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400257**

MALE 58, good looking, placid, seeks honest, loyal, caring female with view to becoming soul mates. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400313**

COLIN 62, divorced, many interests, GSOH, seeking slim, attractive, 50's female for companionship, maybe LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400389**

STEVE 54, attractive, seeks older lady, 55-75 for mutual adult fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399755**

CARL 40, likes DVDs, seeks female for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393766**

COVENTRY male, 42, 6ft 1ins, caring, romantic nature, seeks female, single mum welcome, 25-55, any nationality/Foreign for nice times in and out. Genuine replies only. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398671**

BRIAN 60's, intelligent, many interests, loving, affectionate, WLTM West Mids lady for sharing occasional meetings/weekends. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400115**

52YR old single parent, 5ft 11ins, slim, likes most things, walks, nights out, cinema, animals, seeks caring, honest, trustworthy female. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400039**

BRIAN 73, fit, N/S, own home, likes walks, cycling, meals out, nights in, holidays, travel, seeks genuine, caring female. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399667**

GUY early 60's, fit, N/S, OHAC, seeks slim female, 30-60 for fun, adult times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399567**

LOOKING for love. Telford male, 46, shaved head, average build, likes walks, meals out, seeks female. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397941**

DAVID slightly disabled, likes sports, meals out, nights in, seeks female for fun, friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393192**

MALE fun, outgoing, easy-going, seeking female for good times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393346**

55YR old male, likes sports, film, nights in, seeking female, 30-45 for fun times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398049**

GARY 46, loyal, genuine, GSOH, down to earth, seeking attractive lady for relationship. South Shrops/North Herefordshire. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400237**

STEVE 49, fed up, seeking female for fun and friendship, possible LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393218**

57YR old male, good looking, seeking female for fun times and nights in. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397463**

GARY 39, seeks female, 30-50 for LTR and fun. Single mum welcome. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398747**

FRIENDLY guy 49, tall, fit, GSOH, attractive, seeks lady for discreet fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399091**

TAYLOR 50, tall, athletic, GSOH, WLTM female, attractive, curvy for friendship, maybe more, food, communication, evenings out, travel. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399067**

GENT 54, slightly mad but not bad will make you glad you answered this ad. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398231**

STEVEN 49, good looking, likes a laugh, pubs, seeks female for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397985**

WEST Midlands single guy 60, strong, WLTM affectionate lady, your place or mine for uncommitted enjoyment. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396807**

GOOD looking male, early 50's, 6ft, farmer, outgoing, fun loving, seeking attractive fun loving female, 25-35 who enjoys travel. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393340**

IAN 60, seeks active Wolverhampton lady for discreet daytime fun and mutual pleasure. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399003**

DAVID 40, genuine, down to earth, seeking someone for nights out and great times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398889**

32YR old slim, dark haired, adventurous, creative, likes music, bike rides, country walks and photography, seeks likeminded female. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 352753**

RAYMOND 6ft, mid 70's, honest, caring, likes socialising, seeks caring lady for friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398695**

BRIAN 60's, ordinary man, strong needs, seeks affectionate lady for close friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396765**

ROY 62, tall, fit, loyal, N/S, looking for that special lady. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397637**

INDIAN male, UK born, seeks white English female, 35-45 to enjoy life with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397509**

JAMES 56, 5ft 9ins, professional, OHAC, independent, no ties, seeking loving relationship with likeminded woman. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397473**

JOE 45, GSOH, attractive, medical professional, seeks female for daytime fun and friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396671**

MALE 70's, honest, caring, attractive, likes socialising, seeks smart, attractive, caring lady for meetings. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397975**

39YR old single dad, likes cosy nights in, seeks single, slim lady for fun relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396061**

CLIVE 46, seeking hot chick for plenty of action. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 392772**

GAY SINGLES

IF YOU'RE LOOKING to meet or chat to other men, look no further. TXT: **GAY247** to **65125**

www.localgaydate.co.uk

MALE 34, attractive, 5ft 10ins, blue eyes, blond hair, seeks slim male for fun relationship. Any area, can travel. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 311892**

GAY male, 34, slim, toned, seeking older guy for fun, friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 395735**

CD 70 plus seeking CD 70 plus for friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 393208**

MALE 44, seeking male, 18-23 for fun relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 391626**

BI male, divorced, young, fit 50, own home/business, seeks male, 18-45 for good times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 391849**

Women TEXT FOR FUN!

*see t&c's below. No meetings implied or guaranteed. **Texts cost £1.50** per message Help Desk: **0844 445 7707**

GUYS TEXT FOR FUN. SEND WOL followed by the box number of the person you wish to chat to and send to **66888**
(T&C's below)

50Yr old Christian brunette, attractive, friendly, lonely, likes bowling, reading, cooking, outdoor life. **Text WOL 154567 to 66888**

BEAUTIFUL thing, attractive lady, n/s, beautician, enjoys fashion, antique fairs, days out & country drives. Want to know more. Text me. **Text WOL 159134 to 66888**

FUN blue eyed blonde, a little dizzy at times but a big bundle of fun. **Text WOL 163788 to 66888**

HEY guys! My interests include music, reading, tattoos, cooking, hanging out with mates and many more things. Text me! **Text WOL 168355 to 66888**

I AM an adventurous, outgoing and loyal person. I enjoy going places and trying new things I am a very active person. **Text WOL 172922 to 66888**

FUN, bubbly, happy go lucky, single, mummy, work hard, play hard, friends, family, horse, gym, wine, movies, random nights **Text WOL 218842 to 66888**

I LOVE going out and having a laugh. Im new to all this, so be patient lol. **Text WOL 182056 to 66888**

Men TEXT FOR FUN!

*see t&c's below. No meetings implied or guaranteed. **Texts cost £1.50** per message Help Desk: **0844 445 7707**

LADIES TEXT FOR FUN. SEND WOL followed by the box number of the person you wish to chat to and send to **66888**
(T&C's below)

DIVORCED Male 59, VGSOH, n/s easy-going, enjoy music, poker, cooking, watch football, having a pint in a local pub. **Text WOL 488556 to 66888**

I LOVE the arts, countryside and eating out. Honest, sensuous, with lots to share and give. **Text WOL 493123 to 66888**

I HAVE many interests but derive pleasure from everyday things,whether it be a walk in the park or a coffee by the river. **Text WOL 497690 to 66888**

ROMANTIC guy. I have many interests, but derive pleasure from everyday things, whether it be a walk in a park or coffee by the river. **Text WOL 502257 to 66888**

SPORTY gentleman. 46 yo I have a fun friendly chatty personality! Drop me a line :) **Text WOL 506824 to 66888**

EASY going guy, 45. Ok looks, don't smoke, like soul, jazz, the arts, concerts festivals & beach. Get in touch. **Text WOL 511478 to 66888**

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Join the fun and run to be healthy

DETERMINED fun runners and beginners are starting to take up this year's Action Heart Five training schedule.

The hard work culminates in a five-mile run on Sunday, February 24 which starts and finishes at Russells Hall Hospital, Dudley. It gets under way at 9.30am.

Those taking part will not only be helping themselves by getting fitter but helping others by showing they care.

Last week we outlined the first week's training programme. If you missed the first week's schedule, or did not manage to get started, then don't worry. It is not too late to begin and would be an excellent New Year's resolution to get fit in 2013, beginning with the Action Heart Five training programme.

Remember, get approval from your doctor if you have not been keeping fit previously; warm up before each session and, just as important, warm down afterwards.

If you are planning to follow the training and would like to let us know how you are coping, call Action Heart on 01384 292233 or email running@actionheart.com

So do it now – start off the new year in a healthy way. Download an entry form from www.actionheartrunning.com and send it to the Action Heart office. You will receive your race pack with race number and full details of the route.

Training: Week Two
Monday: Rest.
Tuesday: 10-minute jog
Wednesday: Six-minute jog.
Thursday: Rest
Friday: Eight-minute jog
Saturday: Rest.
Sunday: One-mile jog/walk.

Look out for week three next Thursday.

Foxall a winner for chess club

STOURBRIDGE Chess Club's second team won at Boldmere in Birmingham League Division Three.

The visitors were heavily outgraded on every board, but won 3.5-2.5 with John Foxall winning his game and all five other team members coming away with a draw.

Tribute to manager before goals storm

Stourbridge Juniors

Halesowen Town Colts U11 0
Stourbridge U11 9

STOURBRIDGE'S first game since the death of manager Darren Owen saw a minute's applause.

Jordan Edwards scored in the first half and added three in the second as James Thompson, twice, Mitchell Harrison and Jack Tighe (penalty) also scored.

Stourbridge U12A 2 Stratford U12 2

Stourbridge came from behind twice with goals from Jack Clarke and Rohan Brown.

Stourbridge U12B 3 Bilbrook U12 3 (Stourbridge win 4-1 on penalties)

Stourbridge took an upset cup win against a team leading the next division up. Bilbrook went ahead but Jamie Stanton, with a fourth goal in two games, and Alex Clarke, with a half-volley off the post, put them in front.

An own goal levelled but Bilbrook led on the break. With a minute left Dan Marsons equalised and extra time produced no goals. Stourbridge keeper Cris McGrath's two penalty shoot-out saves were decisive as Alex Clarke, Ritchie Cartwright, Jordi Hope and Joe Kirkby all scored.

Shelfield U13 1 Stourbridge U13A 2

Stourbridge led against the run of play with a fine strike from Aaron Finnegan from 25 yards but were caught cold from a corner as Shelfield levelled. Harry Franey's neat finish was decisive.

Brackley U14 3 Stourbridge U14A 2

Liam Campbell's shot put Stourbridge ahead but they trailed 2-1 until an own goal put them level.

A fine move in a scrappy second half was the winner for Brackley.

Ulverley Hawks U14 0
Stourbridge U14B 1

Stourbridge, with only 11 players, beat last season's champions as good defending kept chances to a minimum before Ross Pritchard's free-kick won it.

Stourbridge U15 Girls 2
Bilbrook U15 Girls 0

A superb diving save by keeper Olivia Hayward lifted Stourbridge.

They scored as Ashleigh Westwood's pass was collected by Poppy Hughes, who fired home via a post.

Stourbridge were caught offside by Bilbrook's high line, but sprung the trap for the second goal. Again the ball was threaded through for Hughes who produced a cool finish to the bottom right-hand corner.

Bilbrook hit the bar twice in the second period – Hughes also struck the woodwork – but there were no further goals.

Stourbridge U16A 2 Hinkley U16 2

Stourbridge shared the spoils in a hard-fought game against second-placed Hinckley United.

Stourbridge led with five minutes left, thanks to goals from Calvin Campbell and Ben Checketts, but Hinckley scored a deserved equaliser in the dying moments.

Stourbridge U16B 4 Halesowen U16 1

Two goals from Harry Greatwich and one apiece by Liam Kendrick and Luke Dimmock gave Stourbridge the victory.

Stourbridge U17 0 Wyre Forest U17 2

Stourbridge were edged out as the visitors scored twice.

Fitness factor could be decider in title battle

DARREN McDERMOTT believes the British title tussle between his old sparring partners Jason Welborn and Frankie Gavin will be a survival of the fittest.

Dudley's McDermott has trained with both Rowley Regis' Welborn, the challenger, and Gavin, the champion from Birmingham, from the gym at his home in Woodsetton.

The two welterweights will battle for the belt at Walsall Town Hall next Friday night and 'Macca' knows what each fighter must do to give themselves the edge.

by Craig Birch

'The Black Country Bodysnatcher' won Midlands and English middleweight titles and competed for the British and Commonwealth crowns during his career.

The 34-year-old knows the challenger inside out as Welborn was his chief sparring partner for fights against Wayne Elcock, Steven Bendall and Darren Barker.

Now McDermott will be ringside as Welborn looks to snatch a British title.

McDermott said: "I have had the pair of them in my gym and they are both good lads who have got something about them that could win the fight.

"Jason has got to be fit, he needs to have trained like he's never trained before and he's got to stay on him for 12 rounds, he can't rest.

"If he gives Frankie a second, he will take an hour so, when he feels tired, he's got to dig that little bit deeper but he is tough enough.

"Jason will give him a fight, whatever you hit him with he just grits his teeth and comes back and he's got the power to hurt Frankie."

Gavin stepped through the ropes into McDermott's training ring in 2010, the same year 'Macca' was forced to retire after brain surgery.

Welborn has only ever been stopped once and Gavin is not regarded as a massive puncher, despite 10 of his 14 wins coming inside the distance.

'Funtime' Frankie opts for punches in bunches while moving in and out of trouble on the back-foot, something McDermott knows well.

He said: "I don't think he can hurt Jason but he could outbox him, he could be too clever; it's not how hard he hits but how many punches he lands.

The show is a sell out but will be live on BoxNation on Sky Channel 437 and Virgin Channel 546. Join at www.boxnation.com.

Walsall Town Hall has started a waiting list for tickets. Call 0845 111 2900.

Champion drivers' success in awards night

Mike Sones, centre, of Owen Motor Club, Aldridge, hands awards to Nigel Williams and co-driver Portia Gregory
Picture: www.RallyAction.co.uk

DRIVERS got their rewards at the Heart of England Rally Championships awards night.

Among the winners were 2012 champion driver Nigel Williams, from Rubery, and his co-driver Portia Gregory of Bromsgrove.

The pair dominated the night at Hagley Golf Club, collecting the media award, Williams wining the best under-25 driver and Gregory best lady.

The crew run a Ford Escort Mark II and thanked their support team for what was an impressive season, leading the series from mid-year.

The 2013 championship kicks off with a launch day at the Curborough Sprint Circuit near Lichfield on Saturday, January 26.

This will be a test day for teams before the first event at Weston Park on the Staffordshire-Shropshire border in March. For more information visit www.awmmc.org.uk.

Isherwood is unveiled as team's final piece

GARETH ISHERWOOD has been unveiled as Dudley's final team member for 2013 – and he says he has no worries about mastering the Wolverhampton speedway track.

The 24-year-old has plenty of National League experience and is a Stoke asset. He had a brief spell with Mildenhall towards the end of last season after a return from serious injury.

Now he relishes riding for the Heathens, who say they have broken a club record for season ticket sales. He said: "It's not a track I've really ridden very much, to be honest.

"Everyone has got good things to say about it though, so I think it's just a case of getting some track time there to get to know the lines."

Meanwhile, he is set on silverware. He, Lewis Blackbird, Ashley Morris and Paul Starke are all experienced at National League level.

Isherwood said: "It's going to be down to us more experienced guys to take the pressure off some of the younger lads.

"I'd like to think I can put up to three points on my starting average."

■ Adam Roynon, one of the most popular Heathens riders, will be honoured at a special night.

He ended last season with a broken leg after a crash at King's Lynn in the play-off final. A benefit night will be held on Tuesday, January 22 from 8pm at the River Rooms, Mill Race Lane, Stourbridge. He will talk about his career and mix with fans. Admission is £3.

■ Dudley have agreed for Mildenhall to take ex-skipper Jon Armstrong on loan for the 2013 season.

Disappointing share of spoils

Knowle Juniors U11 2
West Hagley U11 East 2

GOALS from Ryan Jones and Finley Andrews-Wood earned West Hagley a share of the spoils.

They are unbeaten away since September – but will be disappointed not to have won this match.

West Hagley dominated and club officials reckoned their free-flowing football made it one of their best performances this season.

Chance after chance was created with football of a high tempo, but a draw was the result.

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Heathens reveal their final rider for 2013
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Sports Desk 01902 319461 e-mail: chronsport@expressandstar.co.uk

Revenge win over favourites a stunner

Stourbridge 5 Leamington 1

GARY HACKETT'S men turned in a stunning display to defeat Evo-Stik Southern Premier title favourites Leamington and keep themselves in the promotion mix.

The Glassboys were knocked out of the FA Cup and the Red Insure Cup by the Brakes, but got revenge in style. Jordan Fitzpatrick was in place of Sean Geddes in the heart of midfield.

After 13 minutes, Ben Billingham tussled with Daly to come away with the ball. He passed to Evans and his cross was turned home by the arriving Fitzpatrick.

Six minutes later they were gifted a second as Jamie Hood tried to head back to his keeper. Billingham got in first and scored.

Stourbridge's Jamie Oliver replaced injured Lee Osborne at left-back before a third goal ten minutes before the break.

A Drew Canavan shot saw Cooper get a hand to it and Owen managed to block it on the line in a scramble with Fitzpatrick, only for Evans to push the ball over the line.

Two minutes into first-half stoppage time Leamington's Stefan Moore caught Solly off his line with a lob.

A Solly reaction save on 71 minutes kept the two-goal cushion and four minutes later a Hurren throw saw Benbow challenge for a header with Stefan Morley.

The ball looped up to Billingham, who ran on despite offside appeals, and shot past Cooper.

Stourbridge grabbed a fifth with ten minutes to go as Benbow curled past Cooper. The visitors misery was completed late on as sub Alex Taylor fell awkwardly and was carried off leaving them with ten men having used all their subs.

First United home victory

Highgate Utd 2 Causeway Utd 1

CAUSEWAY were victims of Highgate's first Midland Alliance home win.

Liam Florey's two goals – the winner with virtually the last kick – meant more toil for the visitors.

Causeway were one down at the break after Florey robbed a defender and scored five minutes before the interval.

Stuart Howe turned in Adam Meacham's cross to equalise, but Florey struck after keeper Tom Turner parried a Neil Kitching shot.

Dean Saunders gets to work in Wolves training

Saunders ready to lay down the law

by Tim Nash

NEW Wolves boss Dean Saunders has vowed to bring back discipline and a hard work ethic to Wolves.

Saunders was brought in quickly after the board dismissed Stale Solbakken after the 1-0 FA Cup defeat at non-league Luton Town.

Chairman Steve Morgan believes the players haven't given their all in recent weeks, with four shambolic performances culminating in Saturday night's sacking and the arrival of Saunders just two days later.

Solbakken's exit came amid reports of lapses in timekeeping while on-pitch effort was criticised. Saunders had a 30-minute meeting with players and staff at Compton and said he will put that right.

"I'll have a laugh and a joke and I want a nice atmosphere at the club," he said. "But if you ask any players who have played under me, they will tell you they train harder than they've trained anywhere else, and I drive them non-stop every day.

"Footballers like discipline. You get one or two who don't, but in most walks of life, whatever job you're in, you like to know where you stand.

"I'll say to them that there needs to be discipline because without that, you're nothing, and that applies to any walk of life.

"What time are we supposed to be in?' You're in at 10am, and if you don't you're going to get fined."

Saunders also suggested that all will share the workload on the pitch, unlike under Solbakken, who was prepared to indulge matchwinners over tracking back.

"I'm not worried about individuals – it's all about a team ethic," insisted Saunders. "Unless you're Cristiano Ronaldo and stay up front and do what you like because he wins you games every week, I won't put up with that."

Saunders will be backed in the transfer market but must trim a squad bulging with up to 50 professionals. Wolves' income drops by about £30m this season because of relegation, but that is offset by parachute payments of £16m and sales of Michael Kightly, Matt Jarvis and Steven Fletcher, netting up to £28m.

200 UP FOR ADAM AS RECORD BEATEN

Stourbridge Saxons 40 Huddersfield 0

THE Saxons turned on the style to celebrate prop Adam Sturdy's 200th league appearance for the club.

They retained their perfect playing record and 19 league point cushion with their 17th sequential bonus point win.

Huddersfield had no answer to their power and pace and resorted to a spoiling, damage-limitation game, barely threatening the Saxons line even during the brief period when it was defended by just 12 men.

Man-of-the-match Mark George gave his opposite number a torrid afternoon in the scrum, forcing a series of offences culminating in a penalty try after 11 minutes of this National League Two North game.

Struggling to retain possession and establish an attacking platform, Huddersfield tried to run the ball from deep but dropped it straight into the hands of league top try-scorer Drew Harper who blasted through the cover to equal the club record of 19 league tries in the season.

Penalised

George showed a deft touch to feed captain Ben Hughes who drew the remaining cover before offloading to hooker Stewart Pearl to score a third try

Pete White's quick thinking with a tap penalty looked to have secured a bonus point try before half-time but it was struck off as the Saxons were penalised for an off-the-ball indiscretion.

Stourbridge were still 19-0 up at the interval – and James Rodley opened the second-half scoring with the bonus point try after barely two minutes.

With Huddersfield struggling to contain attacks Saxons dominated territory and possession from a rash

Stourbridge Saxons

of penalty awards. Replacement Caolan Ryan looked to have a clear run in as a big gap appeared, but again the Saxons were penalised for an off-the-ball incident.

Huddersfield lifted the siege, but Will Hurrell came in at pace on a crash ball and bounced a defender aside to score. Hurrell then put Stefan Cooksammy clear but was called back for a forward pass.

The Saxons lost shape for a while after a string of substitutions, then coped two men short as referee Cooper issued yellow cards to Will Harris and Jamie Hearn for technical offences.

With Cooksammy receiving physio attention Huddersfield pressed against 12 but were driven off their own attacking scrum ball.

Ironic cheers greeted a yellow card for a Huddersfield forward for pulling down a driving maul – their 18th penalty transgression. Hughes finished a short-range drive and final try.

Coach Mike Umaga said: "They played a spoiling-type game that we struggled to adapt to at times. We need to learn from that and combat it better in future."

Special day – Adam Sturdy, left, makes his 200th appearance while Drew Harper scores to equal a club record

Nathan Bressington counter-attacks with James Rodley in support during the Saxons' big win over Huddersfield

Lions get points to close gap at the top

Stourbridge Lions 36
Yardley & District 3

STOURBRIDGE LIONS eased up to fourth place in Midlands Three North (West) with this comfortable victory over bottom club Yardley & District.

By the 12th minute they were 10-0 up, George Tildesley making a raking break and finding centre Harry Wainwright to score.

Tom Mitchell converted and added a penalty.

Stour had to wait until almost half-an-hour for the next score, missing good chances on the way. A lineout catch and drive ended with skipper Stuart Doolittle touching down and Mitchell converting.

Yardley rallied and were rewarded with a penalty to leave Lions 17-3 up at the interval.

The second half started with spirited play from Yardley, who never gave up despite huge pressure and injuries which left them down to 13 men with about 15 minutes to play.

However, Stour exerted more pressure and a fine move gave Tom Dews an unconverted try.

On the hour full-back Tildesley picked up a Yardley clearance on halfway and went down the left and under the posts, beating four defenders.

The conversion gave Lions a 29-3 lead and bonus points. Near time, Mitchell broke through after a hack ahead by Wainwright. Mitchell converted his own try to leave Lions four points off the top two places.

The pressure is on now for a league and cup double with the Midlands Vase semi-final in the next fortnight.

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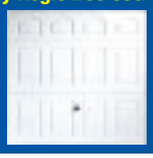

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